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ABSTRACT

Based on the view that parents are their children's first teachers, this trainer's guide presents a series of 10 workshops or "literacy learning parties" designed to assist parents and other family caregivers in helping their preschool children develop the skills needed to learn to read and write. The workshops are small, structured, community-based gatherings to be hosted in homes, schools, churches, and activity centers. The guide's introductory section offers tips for planning for the training related to time and scheduling, adult learning, English as a second language, a welcoming atmosphere, the trainer's role, child development, developmentally appropriate activities, common characteristics of 3- to 5-year-olds, and emergent literacy. The remainder of the trainer's guide is organized into 10 sections, each corresponding to one literacy learning party covering the following topics: (1) promoting children's language development (2 workshops); (2) literacy through play (2 workshops); (3) sharing books; (4) choosing and sharing books, rhymes, and chants; (5) engaging children in writing (2 workshops); (6) early reading strategies--learning the alphabet letters and sounds; and (7) ways to help children read. In each workshop discussion, the following components are included: warm-up activity, content presentation, learning activity, group socialization, and home connection. In addition, the guide contains handouts and photographs that can be used to support training during individual workshops. (Contains 13 references.) (KB)

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LITERACY LEARNING PARTIES

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3-5 YEAR OLDS

ELLEN R. DANIELS

CHILDREN'S RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL, INC.

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MARYLAND EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

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LITERACY LEARNING PARTIES

FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS

TRAINER'S GUIDE

ELLEN R. DANIELS

CHILDREN'S RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL, INC.
WASHINGTON, DC

Children's Resources International, a nonprofit organization located in Washington, DC, is dedicated to improving the quality of educational experiences and opportunities for children and their families in the United States and internationally.

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Foreword

In our program initiatives, services and publications, Children's Resources International, Inc. (CRI) places strong emphasis on the involvement of parents and family members in their children's education and on the fostering of relationships between home, school and community. Our work is supported by studies that demonstrate that family involvement in children's education is a major factor in improving school effectiveness, the quality of education, and children's success in school.

Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds is a 10-part training series designed to assist parents in helping their children develop the skills they will need to learn to read and write. Each *Literacy Learning Party* introduces a specific literacy component and offers parents practical and easy-to-follow activity suggestions for home use. These literacy components (such as promoting oral language development, choosing and sharing books, and engaging children in writing) are presented to enhance the skills of parents who serve as their young children's first teachers.

To enliven the *Literacy Learning Parties*, parent participants will experience firsthand a wide-range of activities that support young children's literacy learning. As interactive workshops, *Literacy Learning Parties* include demonstration, practice, positive feedback, and research-based literacy theory. At the completion of the *Parties*, parents will have strategies to foster their children's literacy and better understand that teaching young children involves time, attention, and sensitivity.

The activities included in the *Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds* have been specially selected from the CRI activity book, *Creating Child-Centered Materials* (Rothschild Stolberg & Daniels, 1998). During each workshop, the presenters will discuss a literacy component, and will introduce one of the activities for further exploration and practice at home. Participants should use the companion *Activity Book* to follow along with the workshop activities, and can come back to these activities as their child grows. Each activity offers options for extensions and variations that can be used as the child's language and literacy skills develop.

Our hope is that these workshops will enrich the everyday opportunities that parents have to assist in their children's growth and development.

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Acknowledgements

This training package would not have become a reality without Linda McCart, Former Chief of Early Childhood Services in Montgomery County, Maryland, and her clear vision of developing an innovative training that offers parents practical information for establishing a literacy-rich home environment. Since its inception, Linda recognized the importance of developing a parent training package that would help preschool-age children master essential early literacy behaviors and ultimately prepare them to be successful learners in school. Debbie Shephard and Leslie Hamm of Montgomery County's Early Childhood Services added insights that were instrumental in conceptualizing what *Literacy Learning Parties* would look like.

The efforts of several people on the Children's Resources International (CRI) administrative team led the way to make these *Literacy Learning Parties* practical, concrete, and easy-to-follow. Under the direction of Pam Coughlin, this training received the proper attention it deserved to support families in their effort to bring literacy into the lives of their young children. The author, Ellen Daniels, provided her expertise in early childhood literacy and practice to guide this training from creation to completion. With an eye on quality and simplicity, Michele Redalen, Julie Empson, Colleen Bane, Mollie Wisecarver, Susannah Empson and Diana Greenwold added their thoughtful reviews and revisions of the document. Jean Iker once again has enlivened our text with her joyful illustrations, Sherry Rusher provided the translation for our Spanish-language activities, songs and handouts, and Cassie Marshall used her precious free time from her new daughter, India, to design a text that is a pleasure to read.

Pam Coughlin
Children's Resources International, Inc.

Introduction

Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds: Trainer's Guide

Introduction

The Literacy Learning Parties Workshops

Literacy Learning Parties are a series of workshops designed to support developing literacy skills in young children. Parents, extended family members, and professionals, can host the parties, as well as interested volunteers who have a vested interest in increasing literacy rates and have successfully completed the training. The principal target audience for the *Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds* is parents and the extended family of children ages 3–5 years. The *Parties* are small, structured, community-based gatherings designed to be hosted in homes, schools, churches and activity centers to maximize convenience and comfort. As well as providing training, the *Literacy Learning Parties* strive to build community-based supports so parents can call upon family, friends and neighbors as they work together to enhance literacy skills at home.

In our program initiatives, services and publications, Children's Resources International, Inc. (CRI) places strong emphasis on the involvement of parents and family members in their child's education and on fostering relationships between home, school and community. This literacy training program and the information regarding literacy and typical development presented in this publication are supported by current research. Studies consistently demonstrate that family involvement is a major factor in improving school effectiveness, quality of education, and a child's overall success in school. Therefore, the goal of *Literacy Learning Parties* is to provide parents with "home-based" strategies to foster their child's individual literacy skills and to help parents better understand that educating young children requires involvement of both home and school, as well as extra time, attention, and sensitivity to their own child's developing literacy skills.

The Companion Volume – The Activity Book

A separate companion book, *Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds: Activity Book*, has been developed to supplement *Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds: Trainer's Guide.* The *Activity Book* has been developed as a guide for the individual participants and includes the activities that are presented in the 10 workshops that comprise the *Literacy Learning Parties.* It is designed for participants and others to keep, take home and use to implement the activities introduced and practiced during the training sessions.

The activities included in the *Literacy Learning Parties* have been specially selected from CRI's previous publication, *Creating Child-Centered Materials* (Rothschild, Stolberg & Daniels, 1998). During each workshop, presenters will discuss a literacy component, and introduce one of the activities for further exploration and practice at home. Participants can use the *Activity Book* to follow along with the workshop activities, and are encouraged to revisit the activities as their child grows and acquires new skills. Each activity offers options for extensions and variations that can be used to support individual skill levels, needs and interests of young children.

Using The *Trainer's Guide*

The *Trainer's Guide* has been divided into ten *Literacy Learning Parties* that correspond to those in the *Activity Book*. In each *Party* discussion, the following components are included:

1. **Warm-up Activity.** A structured activity designed to create essential opportunities for participants to talk, relax and get to know one another as well as the trainers.
2. **Content Presentation.** Lecture notes that guide the introduction of a specific concept or literacy skill presented in the session.
3. **Learning Activity.** An interactive experience designed to reinforce the ideas presented in the content presentation.
4. **Group Socialization.** The "party" in *Literacy Learning Parties*. In some cases includes suggestions for snacks to share with the participants that directly relate to a specific aspect of a topic being discussed in the training session.
5. **Home Connection.** A detailed description of the activity participants will carry out at home with their child. Opportunities to practice a specific activity during a training session will occur as time allows. A copy of the Home Connection Activity is included in the *Trainer's Guide* for easy reference to the *Activity Book*.

In addition, the *Trainer's Guide* contains handouts and photographs that can be used to support training during individual sessions/workshops.

Handouts. Several handouts to be photocopied and distributed at the *Parties*, as well as songs and chants, some in English as well as Spanish.

Overheads. Photographs that can be made into overheads or passed around during training to further illustrate ideas presented in the lecture.

Trainers will also notice the use of icons throughout this *Trainer's Guide*. The symbols below have been inserted in the workshop narrative to indicate when the text refers to an overhead, activity, handout, or song and chant:

Overheads Activities Handouts Songs & Chants

Planning for Training: Meeting the Needs of Participants

Time and Scheduling

An important consideration when planning the *Literacy Learning Parties* is the schedule and availability of potential participants. Parents often have a difficult time arranging for childcare, taking time away from work, and finding transportation to the training site. All of these considerations must be taken into account before making any further arrangements or final plans for training.

Some trainers may ask, "Do I have to present these sessions in order?" This is a complex question. The *Literacy Learning Parties* were designed so that the concepts presented in each session build upon the concepts covered in the previous session. We strongly recommend presenting the workshops in the order they are listed in this *Trainer's Guide;* however, a major priority as a trainer is to be flexible and responsive to the specific needs of the participants. Therefore, individual trainers may choose to present the entire workshop or select key aspects of one particular workshop to present to participants. The trainer MUST know the interest and needs of participants in order to create the most effective, comprehensive series of workshops possible.

The approximate time required to complete each component of the training is included in the training narrative. For example, the Warm-up Activity will generally take about 20 minutes at the beginning of each session. Each training session will last about an hour-and-a-half, depending on the amount of time participants need for questions and/or additional support.

As indicated above, the scheduling of the *Literacy Learning Parties* will depend on the availability of participants. The options for time of day, length of training sessions and duration of entire training program will vary greatly from trainer to trainer. If it is convenient to hold the sessions on Saturday mornings, trainers may elect to present two or three sessions in one day. However, if training occurs in the evenings, one session per evening is usually best. Some trainers may also want to consider hosting *Parties* two or three times a week. Whatever schedule your participants find convenient, keep in mind that they will need time to digest the information you present, and time to return home to plan and implement the activities with their own child before moving on to the next set of skills or concepts. Therefore, it is important to allow adequate time between each workshop or "series" of workshops that will be given on the same day or during the same week.

The Adult Learner

Many educators have a great deal of experience working with young and school-aged children. However, it is essential that educators and other professionals preparing to host the *Literacy Learning Parties for 3-5 Year Olds* be knowledgeable about adults' learning needs as well. Adults often assimilate information differently than children. Trainers must recognize that the participants they will be working with come to training with a diverse range of racial and cultural backgrounds, educational experiences, and knowledge. Adult learners enrolled in their workshops may also require more concrete examples and hands-on experience with materials in order to facilitate the application of new techniques and approaches once at home.

Five things to remember when meeting the needs of the Adult Learner:

Enable adult learners to fully participate and take new risks by minimizing threats to self-esteem.

Create connections by drawing on what the learner already knows about the subject.

Encourage self-direction so learning can be individualized.

Provide variety in the way the material is presented.

Be efficient so participants don't feel their time is being wasted.

Adult Learning Styles

Research tells us that everyone has a unique, individual learning style. Some people are *visual learners* and learn best by seeing someone else do something. Usually, these individuals like carefully sequenced presentations of information. They also prefer to write down what is being said or taught. When absorbing new information during training sessions, these learners are generally quiet and seldom distracted by noise.

Visual learners differ from *auditory learners*, who often do not need to look at what is being demonstrated and frequently do not need to take notes. Auditory learners rely on their ability to hear and remember. During training sessions, auditory learners may be talkative and perhaps easily distracted by noise.

Kinesthetic learners absorb new information through direct involvement in activity. They are hands-on learners. They seek to touch and manipulate materials and enjoy physical movement during learning activities. During training sessions, their approach to learning can often appear haphazard and fidgety, however, it is important to remember that kinesthetic learners are processing information through their senses and body movements.

Trainers need to be sensitive to the diverse learning styles and intelligence of their audience of adult learners. To be most effective, trainers must provide a variety of opportunities for their participants to demonstrate their individual knowledge and skills using their preferred competencies. Workshops and training sessions that are designed to

meet the needs and learning styles of the participants, as opposed to the preferred training/presentation styles of the trainer, have proven to be the most enjoyable and most effective in terms of the carry-over of concepts and ideas into the homes and lives of young children.

English as a Second Language

Many participants will speak languages other then English in their homes. Respect and sensitivity to "Home Languages" is key to successful trainings and the carry-over of ideas and concepts into the home. By embracing "home languages" and celebrating the diversity of participants, trainers support the overall philosophy and goals of this literacy program.

Participants frequently ask questions about reading and writing in English versus their "home" or native language. They often worry that their own levels of ability in terms of reading and writing in English will effect their child's education or success in school. Understanding what research says about growing up bilingual and its impact on education and learning, is critical.

Creating a Welcoming Atmosphere: Developing an Effective Learning Environment for Adults

Adults learn best when the learning environment is comfortable and safe. It is important that participants meet in a location that is accessible and conducive to the goals of the program. For example, the room needs to be large enough to accommodate the group, be comfortable in terms of seating and work space, ensure the privacy of participants, and when necessary, equipped with audiovisual and other materials needed to carry out each session. Seating should be arranged in an informal manner, where participants can readily see and speak to one another. Options for seating arrangements include:

- Classroom Style: Like a traditional classroom, all participants sit at tables in rows facing the presenter. This arrangement is conducive to note taking, but limits group discussion. This arrangement is appropriate for larger groups.
- U-shaped: In this arrangement, participants can easily see each other and the presenter, who will sit or stand at the head of the group at the open end of the U. In this arrangement, the trainer is placed in a leadership position. Best for groups of 15-30.
- Circled Chairs or Tables: The most informal seating arrangement. Allows face-to-face contact for all the participants as well as the presenter/trainer. It also places the presenter and learners at the same level of importance. It works best in groups of up to 16.

Trainers will also need an appropriate amount of space to display books, materials, and projects. One large table off to the side of the group is usually sufficient.

The Role of The Trainer

During the workshop, the trainer/facilitator guides the group through a variety of activities. The facilitator is responsible for preparing the workshop, structuring discussions, developing group cohesiveness, pointing out common themes, redirecting discussion when necessary, maintaining a positive tone, and assigning at-home activities.

The best facilitators typically arrive early to complete final preparations for their training sessions and greet all participants as they arrive. Taking care of last minute details helps trainers feel more confident and frees their mental energies to focus on priorities —the audience—once the session begins.

Before the workshop begins, facilitators need to attend to three areas:

- The comfort and perspective of the entire audience
- The utility of the learning environment
- The workspace for the session

Keeping in mind the needs of the adult learner, there are many things that a trainer can do to encourage participation and facilitate understanding of the content being presented. Trainers must create a supportive atmosphere by modeling tolerance and respect. Trainers should experiment with the ideas and techniques in the *Trainer's Guide*, feel comfortable sharing their own opinions and experiences as they pertain to the concepts being discussed, and ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to contribute as they feel comfortable. Most importantly, trainers must be willing to take risks, and have fun. A successful training is one in which the participants learned a new skill, enjoyed themselves and look forward to returning to the next session.

Guidelines and Techniques for Facilitating Group Discussions

- Paraphrase the words of participants so that they feel understood and other participants hear a concise summary of what has been said at greater length.

  So, what you're saying is that you have to be very careful about the words you use with your child.

- Check the meaning of the words or a statement made by a participant by asking for clarification.

  Singing songs supports your child's communication skills? I'm not sure I understand exactly what you mean. Could you please explain it again?

- Compliment an interesting or insightful comment.

That's a good point. I'm glad that you brought that to our attention.

- Elaborate on a participant's contribution to the discussion with examples, or suggest a new way to view a problem.

  Your comments provide an interesting point from a bilingual perspective. We could also consider how multi-lingual families view the same situation.

- Energize a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor, or if necessary, prodding the group for more contributions.

  Oh my, we have lots of quiet people! Here's a challenge for you. For the next two minutes, let's see how many ways we can think of to promote preschool age literacy development.

- Disagree (gently) with a participant's comments to stimulate further discussion.

  I can see where you are coming from, but I'm not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that is different then Ana's?

- Mediate differences of opinion between participants, and relieve any tensions that may be brewing.

  I think that Carmen and Diana are not really disagreeing with each other but are just bringing out two different sides of this issue, or, Carmen and Diane have raised some interesting points regarding this issue. There truly are so many considerations and perspectives that must be taken into account.

- Pull together ideas, showing their relationship to each other.

  As you can see from these comments, the words we chose to use can offend people. Both participants have given us real, everyday examples of how they have felt excluded.

- Change the group process by altering the method for obtaining participation or move the group to a stage of evaluating ideas that have been placed before the group.

  Let's break into smaller groups and see if you can come up with some criteria for establishing gender-sensitive word usage.

- Summarize (and record, if desired) the major views of the group.

  I have noted three major ideas that have come from the group's discussion about building a bond with your child: (1) Playing with your child helps to build a bond. (2) Talking to and with your child builds a bond. (3) Attending to your child's needs helps to build a bond.

Ten Time Savers for Active Learning

Learning takes time. Therefore, it is crucial that no time be wasted. Below are ten tried and true time-saving techniques that help keep the session on schedule:

Start on time. This sends a message that the schedule is important. If the participants are tardy or are not yet in the room, a facilitator may choose to begin the workshop with a discussion or "filler" activity.

Give clear instructions. If directions for a project or activity are involved or complicated, put them in writing. Otherwise, break them down into manageable pieces.

Prepare visual information ahead of time. Write main points on a flip chart or blackboard before the session starts. Use "headlines" to capture what participants are saying or select a recorder from the group.

Distribute handouts quickly. A facilitator will need to establish when it is the right time to distribute handouts. In some situations it is best to wait until the workshop is complete before distributing handouts. At other times, it may be best to distribute handouts when they match pertinent topics being discussed. In any event, handouts can be quickly disseminated when prepared in stapled packets and distributed or placed in central areas of the room so that several people can help.

Expedite small-group reporting. Ask each group to list their ideas on chart paper and post their lists on the walls of the room. In this way, all of the groups' work can be viewed and discussed at the same time. Or, going from group to group, have each group report only one item at a time so that everyone can listen for possible overlap. This strategy minimizes the repetition of ideas.

Keep discussions moving. Express the need to move on without calling on all participants. During a subsequent discussion, be sure to call first on those who were cut off during previous discussions. Also, begin discussions by stating a time limit and suggesting how many contributions time will permit.

Swiftly obtain volunteers. Don't wait endlessly for volunteers to emerge. Recruit volunteers before the session starts or restarts after a break; or call on individuals when there are no immediate volunteers.

Be prepared for tired and lethargic groups. Provide a list of ideas, questions, or even answers, and ask participants to select ones they agree with. Frequently, the list will trigger thoughts and issues from others.

Quicken the pace of activities from time to time. Often, putting participants under time pressure energizes them and makes them more productive.

Get the group's prompt attention. Use a variety of cues or attention-getting devices to remind the group to reconvene after small-group activity.

A presenter's experience with providing training may range widely, from inexperienced, beginner, to intermediate or advanced. The more experience a presenter has with the material, and the greater her/his understanding of interests and needs of the participants, the greater the level of comfort and subsequently the level of success in terms of training.

Background on Child Development

Given the many roles a trainer is required to play, it is important to have a basic understanding of child development. A solid grasp of typical development helps facilitate the introduction of the material in the *Literacy Learning Parties*, and prepares trainers to answer the many questions participants will likely raise. It is common and understandable that parents, after hearing the material presented in the lecture, will ask questions like, "When will my child begin to speak in complete sentences?" or "My child doesn't know the names of colors yet, should I be concerned?" Having a background in child development will help presenters answer these questions, and have a sense of when parents should be referred to someone with more expertise.

Presenters will also find it useful to read through and familiarize themselves with all aspects of the *Literacy Learning Parties* before beginning their first session. Each workshop describes a specific aspect of children's development in terms of literacy and is a great resource for trainers to call upon when answering both common and perhaps more challenging questions.

The information below is adapted from the CRI methodology, *Creating Child-Centered Classrooms for 3-5 Year Olds* (Coughlin et. al., 2000).

What Are Developmentally Appropriate Activities?

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the major professional early childhood organization in the United States, ascribes two dimensions to the term "developmentally appropriate": age appropriateness and individual appropriateness (Bredekamp, 1987).

Age Appropriateness

Human development research indicates that children undergo universal, predictable sequences of growth and change during the first nine years of life. These predictable changes occur in all domains of development: physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and linguistic. Knowledge of typical development of children provides a framework from

which teachers and parents can plan appropriate experiences (Bredekamp, 1987).

To implement developmentally appropriate practices, the teachers and parents must be cognizant of the range of normal development. Adults should keep in mind that, although there are predictable sequences of growth, they do not take place on the same day, week, or even month. Inevitably, there will be differences among children. The Chart of Normal Development found below describes the average development of communication skills for children in the United States.

When activities are not linked to developmental factors, children experience failure and frustration. Parents and teachers alike should offer opportunities for success, not frustration. However, do not make everything easy for the children; instead practice tailoring challenging activities to each child's developmental level.

Individual Appropriateness

Each child has a unique pattern and timing of growth, as well as an individual personality, learning style, and family background. Both the curriculum and adults' interactions with children should be responsive to individual differences. Learning results from the interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas, and people. These experiences should match the child's developing abilities while challenging the child's interest and understanding (Bredekamp, 1987).

To make activities individually appropriate, parents and teachers must observe each child carefully and determine each child's abilities, needs, interests, temperament, and learning style. Tailoring activities to individual children also requires a keen knowledge of the potential activities that are available.

Children who are challenged at their own level of development will feel good about themselves and will be able and eager to explore new ideas and activities. Children for whom expectations are above or below their level of development may lose interest and become bored, restless, or frustrated.

Age-Related Characteristics

Although each child grows and develops in a unique way, all children proceed through known sequences of developmental stages. Within those stages, they often share characteristics common to many children of the same age.

Common Characteristics of Three-Year-Old Children

Children between the ages of three and four years can be exuberant, loving, and rude at the same time. They are struggling to make sense of their world. They continue to have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality. They are beginning to understand

that their actions have consequences and they are learning to set their own limits. In doing so, this age group is affectionate and cooperative one minute, bossy and demanding the next.

Three-year-olds are rapidly developing language skills, and they easily move between using baby talk and descriptive paragraphs. They often talk out loud to themselves as they work out a problem or complete an activity. These children have very high energy, but short attention spans, typically moving quickly from activity to activity. Their play is both parallel and social.

Common Characteristics of Four-Year-Old Children

Children between four and five years old often feel invincible and ready to tackle any new challenge. Unlike their younger peers, this age group engages in elaborate, cooperative social play. They are beginning to show empathy for others and can talk about their own and other's feelings.

These children test limits and rationalize their own behavior. They feel comfortable telling lies, but are outraged if adults stray from the truth. Although four-year-olds still have relatively short attention spans, they are becoming expert problem solvers, and can concentrate for a sustained period of time if a topic is of special interest to them. Moreover, they are able to generalize from one activity or situation to another.

This age group is very interested in their own and others' bodies, and can become preoccupied with cuts or injuries. They have many fears, and may experience terrifying dreams.

These children are developing large motor skills, and show nonstop physical gymnastics. Their energy seems boundless. They have growing vocabularies, and use well-formed sentence structure and more complex grammar.

Common Characteristics of Five-Year-Old Children

The child between five and six years old is often sweet and eager to please adults. They are very social and play with three or four friends at a time. At this age, children prefer playmates of the same sex. They have a sense of humor, often making up silly jokes that they tell over and over. They love to play games but want to win, and frequently change the rules to their own advantage.

At this age, children exhibit longer attention spans. More complex thinking and problem-solving abilities also develop. The child is able to focus on tasks and strives to meet self-set standards. Five- and six-year-olds love to talk, are articulate, and like to play with words—their language development is advanced. They use more complex sentences and will self-correct incorrect verb tenses.

Physically, children this age are very agile and are becoming interested in gymnastics and organized sports. They are beginning to develop better motor skills. Such activities as dressing, cutting, drawing, and writing are easier to perform. These children are beginning to have a sense of their own past, and often enjoy recounting events that occurred when they were "little."

Children between five and six years old move between compliance and oppositional behavior. They are literal and concrete, and like structure and consistency.

Chart of Normal Development
Communication Skills: Understanding & Speaking
Two Years
Points to & names simple pictures
Uses personal pronoun "me"
Uses two word phrases
Uses the words "my" and "mine" to indicate possession
Understands & asks simple questions: "what" and "where"
Understands "no"
Makes negative statements: "Can't open it."
Names mouth, eyes, nose, and feet
Can repeat sentences of three and four syllables
Two Years, Six Months
Responds to simple "yes" or "no" question related to visual information
Uses three- to four-word phrases/simple sentences
Uses possessive nouns
Uses pronouns to refer to others
Requests needs and wants
Enjoys listening to simple storybooks for 10-15 minutes and requests them again
Describes actions depicted in pictures
Uses plurals, adding "s"
Names body parts: hair, head, ears, hands, legs, arms, fingers, stomach, back, and toes

Three Years
Uses simple four- to five-word sentences
Uses personal pronoun "I"
Answers "who" questions
Uses negative phrases
Uses past tense, tells about past experiences
Asks & answers "why" questions
Uses prepositions: in, on, under, and beside
Carries out a series of 2 to 3 related directions
Understands relationships expressed by if, then/because
Points to chin, thumbs, knees, neck, and fingernails
Repeats one nursery rhyme & sings a simple song
Three Years, Six Months
Asks questions: "what", "who", and "why" for information
Relates experiences with some understanding of sequence and ending/closure
Names chin, thumbs, knees, neck, and fingernails
Names colors: red and blue
Speech is understandable to strangers, still some errors
Four Years
Understands some conjunctions
Defines familiar nouns
Asks "when" and "how" questions
Asks definitions of words
Follows 3 unrelated commands in proper order
Points to chest, heels, ankles, and jaw
Names colors green, yellow, orange, and purple
Understands comparatives like pretty, prettier, prettiest
Understands sequencing of events when told them

Four Years, Six Months
Can describe differences in objects
Can describe similarities in objects
Names chest, heels, ankles, and jaw
Names colors brown, black, pink, white, and gray
Talks about causality by using "and so,"
Uses irregular verbs and nouns
Demonstrates a variety of uses of language: gaining & giving information, expressing ideas and opinions
Five Years
Uses five-word sentences
Participates in conversation without monopolizing it
Uses words related to sequence
Uses tomorrow and yesterday
Answers the telephone, takes a simple message, and delivers it
Can repeat sentences of nine and ten syllables
Routinely answers one question during a group activity of 10-15 minutes
Six Years
Uses six-word sentences
Relates experiences or shares items with a group of classmates
Answers "when" questions
Repeats sentences of eleven and twelve syllables

Emergent Literacy: Language, Reading and Writing Skills

Literacy refers to the interrelatedness of language—speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Research over the past decade supports the concept of *emergent literacy;* that literacy develops within the young child as a gradual process over time. From birth, the child is an active participant in laying the foundations of literacy. The child explores his or her environment, learns to communicate, and in a short time, begins to construct ideas about how things work in the surrounding world. For literacy to emerge, the child's own natural learning ability has to be encouraged by a supportive, literacy-promoting environment.

As the child's first teachers, parents play an important role in supporting literacy development. They encourage literacy development by talking with and reading to their children. By the time a child enters school, he or she already knows a great deal about language and literacy.

Emergent literacy supports the following beliefs about literacy development:

Learning to read and write begins very early in life. Children (babies) have very early contact with written language. By age 2 or 3 many children can identify signs, labels and logos in homes and communities. Young children also experiment with writing. Early scribbling displays characteristics of the writing system of their culture. Writings of 4 year olds from Saudi Arabia, Egypt and America will look different long before the children can write conventionally.

Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly in young children. Children do not first learn to read and then learn to write—we need to speak of literacy development, not of reading readiness or of pre-reading. We also need to realize that writing is actually an easier first learning activity for young children than reading is.

Literacy develops from real-life situations in which reading and writing are used to get things done. The vast majority of literacy experienced by young children is embedded in some activity that goes beyond the goal of literacy itself. Literacy is functional, meaningful, and authentic; that's what they see adults doing. It is not a set of abstract, isolated skills to be learned.

Children learn literacy through active engagement. Children learn literacy through their favorite reading and re-reading of storybooks. When they "re-read" a book it is not a memorization of text. This is an example of the child reconstructing the meaning of the book. In children's invented spelling you see their attempts at reconstructing their knowledge of written language. Invented spelling is a way to see the phonetic elements a child is acquainted with.

Being read to plays a special role in the literacy development of the young child. Reading to our children on a daily basis is one of the greatest gifts that we can give them. It is never too early to start. By listening to the printed word children can develop a feel for the patterns, the flow, and the nature of written language. Children receive a global sense of what reading is all about and what it feels like. They develop a positive attitude towards reading that is a powerful motivation when the child reaches school. It is also an important means whereby children can begin forming concepts of books, print, and reading.

Learning to read and write is a developmental process. Children pass through the stages in a variety of ways and at different ages. The theories of Piaget and Vygotsky were instrumental in understanding the developmental processes that children experience in learning. There are developmental stages in a child's reading acquisition and developmental stages in a child's writing growth.

The areas of language learning, reading, and writing are interlocking pieces of a puzzle that answers the question, "What is Literacy?" The first step to solving this puzzle is to discuss developmental stages of language, reading, and writing.

Literacy Development: Language

Young children are constantly communicating—by listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All forms of language surround them as they interact with each other and with adults, and as they engage in a wide variety of activities and experiences. Early childhood language experiences emerge naturally from meaningful conversations and encounters between adults and children and among children.

Spoken language is the foundation for reading and writing. The spoken language a young child acquires during preschool helps him or her connect words and sounds with printed words. Encouraging spoken language is an ongoing process. It is not something that can be accomplished in a month or even a year; it requires time and patience.

The years from age 2 to 5 are especially important in the process of acquiring language, because:

- The number of words that a child knows grows from 250 to 3,000.
- A child learns at least five new words a day.
- The child learns the rules for putting words together properly.
- The child speaks in more complex sentences.
- The child learns the social rules of conversation and play.

Literacy Development: Reading and Sound Awareness Skills

There is more to literacy than just learning letters. Letters are simply pictures that represent sounds. Sound awareness is the understanding and use of sounds in language. As children learn that words are made up of individual sounds, they begin to understand that letters represent these smaller sound units. Through blending and separating sounds, a child strengthens the foundation for future reading and writing. Sound awareness skills are reinforced daily through conversations, jokes, story time, and music.

Children tend to acquire sound awareness skills in a developmental sequence that usually begins at birth. Children need to be able to produce the sound before they usually can blend and separate that sound in words. Therefore, sound awareness skills often develop at the same time as articulation. By introducing children to the sounds in words before introducing the letters in words provides a valuable skill for children, particularly as they grow older and begin to read and spell. Playing sound awareness games provides a child a deeper understanding of sounds before the sounds become restricted to letters.

Literacy Developments: Hand Grip and Writing

Children's own writing is a central component of a natural language learning classroom. Like reading, writing is a process and is closely linked to the other language modes—speaking, listening, and reading. Like reading, writing involves thinking and feeling. In addition, a child's home is full of wonderful writing opportunities to develop their hand grasp and writing skills. It usually coincides with a heightened interest in print, but needs to progress gradually as children are still developing fine motor coordination in the hand during the preschool years. The stages of grasp development are as follows.

Age	Name	Description
1-2 years	Fist or Overhand Fist Grip, Palmer.	All fingers are wrapped around the pencil. The back of hand may be facing the child.
2-3 years	Three-Finger Grip, Digital	Two fingers are on one side and the thumb opposite. There is no hole created.
3-4 years	Static, Emerging Tripod	Two or three fingers are on one side, and the thumb opposite. A small hole is created, but may be squeezed.
4-5 years	Tripod/Mature grip	Standard writing grasp with one finger on top, one finger below, and the thumb opposite. A hole is created and maintained.

As young children learn the alphabet and the sounds that letters make, they may also begin to experiment with writing. The development of writing may vary depending on the needs of the child, including their strengths, interests, and learning styles.

Summing Up

The outcome of learning to write and read is to communicate, explore, and develop into curious thinkers about the world. The mistakes children make as they learn to read and write are a natural part of development.

Literacy Learning Party #1: Promoting Children's Language Development I

Purpose: A child's reading success depends on his or her use and understanding of the spoken language. This *Literacy Learning Party* helps participants nurture spoken language by exposing preschool-age children to a variety of language-learning activities.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Before the session, write the following message on a piece of chart paper.

This is my partner_____ and her/his
favorite activity is_____.
Her/His favorite food is _____.
He/She is good at _____.

Ask each participant to choose a partner to interview. The purpose of the interview is to collect some information about each other's interests and favorite things. The message on the chart paper helps guide the interview, but the conversation does not have to be limited to these items. Allow 10 minutes total, 5 minutes for each person, to collect the information.

Procedure: Ask participants to move to an open space in the room and form a circle, either sitting or standing. Next explain to the group that each person will have an opportunity to introduce his or her partner. Review with the group the purpose of the activity:

- To develop and practice language skills
- To develop and practice listening skills
- To develop the ability to speak to a group

2. Presentation of "Promoting Children's Language Development I" Content (20 minutes)

Young children are constantly communicating—by listening, talking, reading, and writing. All forms of language surround them as they interact with each other and with adults, and engage in a wide variety of activities and experiences. Early childhood language experiences emerge naturally from meaningful conversations and encounters between adults and children and among children.

Spoken language is the foundation for reading and writing. The spoken language a young child acquires during preschool helps him or her connect words and sounds with printed words. Encouraging spoken language at home and in the preschool classroom is a continuing process. It is not something that can be accomplished in a month or even a year; it requires time and patience.

Parents, teachers, and other adults must work together to help with the young child's language development. An adult who knows the child well can be effective because the child trusts him or her. Follow these suggestions when conversing with young children:

- *Listen attentively and respectfully.* Look at children as they are talking to let them know that you are interested.
- *Speak slowly and keep sentences short.* Children can understand short sentences more easily than long ones. As the children understand and speak more, make your sentences longer and use larger words.
- *Use a calm and pleasant tone of voice.* This encourages children to listen and to speak.
- *Talk about the here and now.* Actual real-life experiences are most interesting to a child.

Talking *with* children gives them the opportunity to express themselves and gives you the opportunity to respond to their feelings, opinions, and worries. This is different than talking *to* them. When you talk *to* a child, only you are talking and only you take the opportunity to express yourself. Talking *with* a child will establish better communication between the two of you and bring a better understanding.

Adults can help young children learn to talk using the following tips:

Talk with children. (Show Photo 1A of an adult talking with a child.) Communication skills develop when children listen to and talk about objects and events that interest them. Spend time every day in conversation with a child or small group of children. One of the best times to do this is at meals, while sitting beside the child. Conversation can focus on such things as the name of the fruit they are eating or how it will taste.

Talk normally about anything that interests the child. As adults talk with children about their interests and ask questions to expand their answers, children develop the capacity to share their personal experiences. ("What's that Julie, you like summer best of all? Me too, I love to swim and ride bikes. What do you like to do?")

Read with children. (Show Photos 1B, 1C, and 1D of adults reading with children.) At a very early age, young children are able to listen to stories. Each child should be read to every day, either individually or in a small group. Re-reading favorite books helps a child come to know the language in the book and develop the ability to name objects or describe what he or she sees in the pictures.

Many wonderful books are available for young children, on a wide range of appropriate topics. Among these are storybooks, fairy tales, fables, informational nonfiction books, wordless books, alphabet books, and poetry.

Make talking fun. (Show Photos 1E and 1F of making talking fun.) Children gain communication or language skills at home and preschool by talking, storytelling, singing, and making real-life adventures. At a very early age, young children enjoy listening to adults tell stories. Gradually children begin to add simple comments and ask questions. Real-life adventures such as visits to the store, the post office, the zoo, etc., provide common experiences to talk about in groups or individually. Ask questions and share your thoughts with them.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Through reading stories, children learn about people, places, objects, and events in the real world. By dramatizing stories, children learn to relate the print to their lives and to spoken language. They also learn to play different roles and to communicate with others.

Procedure:

- Read aloud *Jump, Frog, Jump* written by Robert Kalan and ask participants to pretend they are frogs. You should hear playful "ribbit" noises and see lots of hopping!

- Form small groups of 4 or 5 and select a book. Each group will have either Bill Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* or *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* Have one participant act as the parent/teacher and read the book while the others enjoy enacting the stories.

- If time permits, have volunteer groups present their story to the larger group as a play!

- After each presentation, ask the group questions such as: Who is in the story? What important things happened? Can this really happen? Which animal came first in the story? Second? etc.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)—What can I talk to my children about?

While enjoying graham crackers, extend the animal theme created by the previous activity. Ask table groups to make a list of topics that they have talked about or want to talk to their children about. Share the lists at the conclusion of the group socialization time.

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 1: Touch-and-Tell Mystery Box

Because young children first learn about their world by using their senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting—the *Touch-and-Tell Mystery Box* is a excellent activity to reinforce sensory learning as well as spoken language.

Refer participants to the *Touch-and-Tell Mystery Box* activity in their *Activity Book* and provide medium-sized boxes for each participant to use at home. Show the parents how to use a *Mystery Box*. Be sure to include a few items from nature (rocks, feathers, acorns, etc.). Ask a volunteer to feel the item with his or her hands. Encourage the volunteer to talk aloud as he or she describes the shape, texture, and size, and then make a guess as to what the object might be. At the end of the turn, summarize the description, "you said it was round and soft, and that it is a ball."

Encourage participants to ask questions about this activity or any of the other material presented during the session.

Photo 1A

Talking with Child

Literacy Learning Party #1

Photo 1B

Reading with Children

Literacy Learning Party #1

Photo 1C

Reading with Child

Literacy Learning Party #1

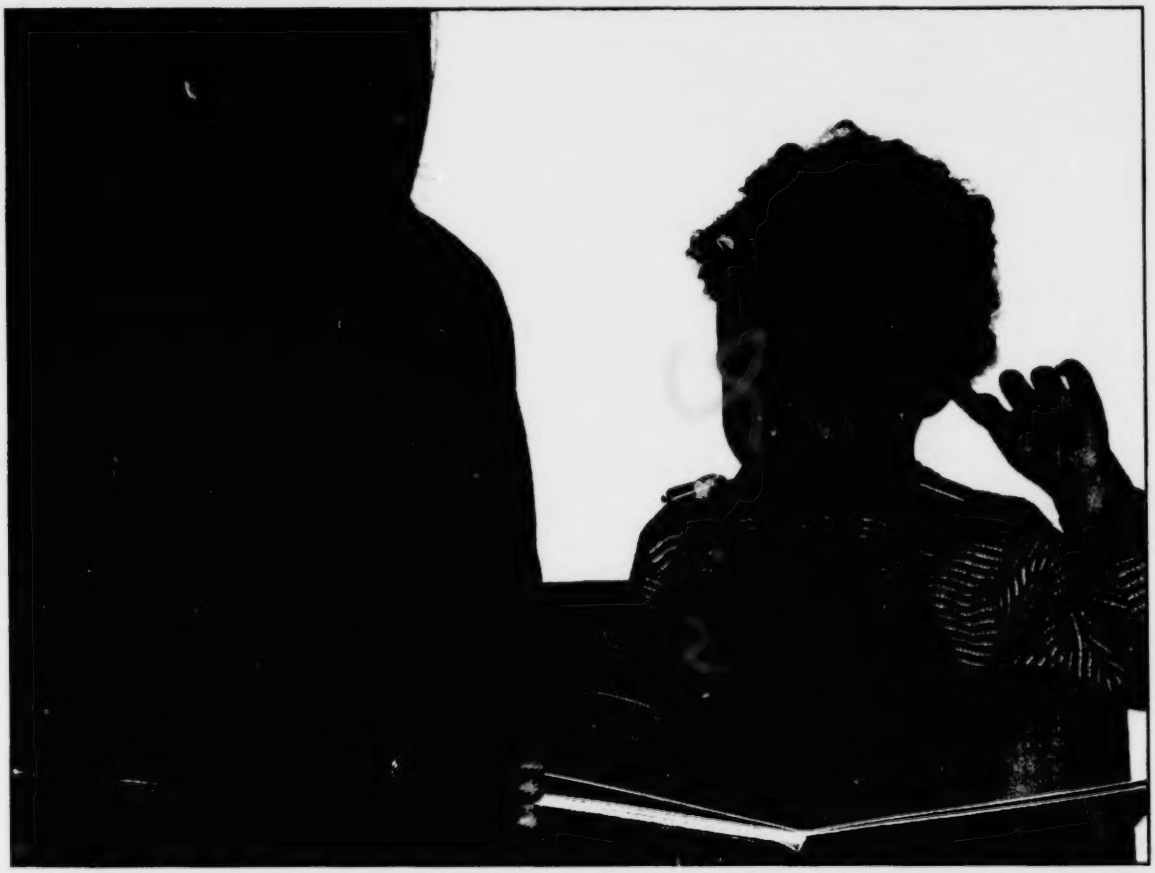


Photo 1D

Reading with Child

Literacy Learning Party #1

Photo 1E

Making Talking Fun

Literacy Learning Party #1

Photo 1F

Making Talking Fun

Literacy Learning Party #1

Activity 1

Touch-and-Tell Mystery Box

Literacy Learning Party #1:
Promoting Children's Language Development I

Literacy Connection

Use descriptive language when speaking with your child. Encourage patience, as young ones ask constant questions. Although at times children's search for information can be bothersome, adults must remember that children are in fact looking for information about the world. Their questions let us know their interests and focus from moment to moment.

Purpose: Children use the sense of touch to explore and evaluate experience. The touch-and-tell mystery box helps children expand their vocabularies as they describe what they feel. This mystery box activity involves nature items, but the variety of objects that can be contained in the box is endless. This experience focuses on the children's ability to feel, observe, and communicate their observations. They discuss number, texture, shape, and size. They develop the ability to discriminate by touch between various items.

Materials: medium-sized box
collection of rocks, acorns, branches, leaves, shells, feathers

Preparation:

1. Cut a hand-sized hole in a medium-sized box.

2. Collect 2 specimens of a variety of items: rocks, feathers, acorns, tree branches, leaves, shells, etc.

Activity: Put 1 item into the mystery box. Place between 2 and 5 items on the table in the sight of the child. One item must be the same as the item that is in the mystery box. Ask the child to put his hand inside the box and guess which of the items on the table is also in the box. Encourage the child to look at that item on the table and use texture words to describe the item in the box.

Extensions and variations:

- Rather than placing 1 set of items within view of the child, place 2 - 5 items in the mystery box. Then place 1 object from the other set in front of the box. Ask the child to search the mystery box for the same object.

- In a small group of 2 or 3 children, each child reaches into the box and describes 1 of the items. The parent may ask the child if the item is hard or soft, rough or smooth, cold or warm. The children take turns guessing what the item is, based on the description given. Encourage the use of descriptive language to build vocabulary.

- Teach shapes by placing in a large bag items such as a ball, a square wooden block, and a musical triangle.

- Place 3 pencils of different lengths in a large bag. Ask the child to reach in and remove the shortest pencil. Replace the pencil and ask for the longest pencil. Replace the pencil and ask for the "middle-sized" pencil.

Literacy Learning Party #2:
Promoting Children's Language Development II

Purpose: Children acquire spoken language by talking and listening to adults around them. This *Literacy Learning Party* provides additional activities that support effective language development in preschool-age children, such as the use of open-ended questions, puppet play, and storytelling.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Before this *Learning Party*, write on the top of a piece of chart paper, "How can I help?"

Procedure: Begin this *Learning Party* by reading the big book, *How Can I Help?* by Christine Hood to the large group. Make sure that your reading voice is loud and energetic so that you hold your listeners' interest.

Read it again and ask the participants to pay close attention during the second reading and think of ways that they help their family members at home. After you finish reading, tell the participants that you want them to be asking themselves, "How can I help?"

Write the responses to the question "How can I help?" on the chart paper. Give everyone a chance to respond and see his or her sentence written down on the chart paper. For example,

> How can I help?
> I can do the dishes. Gabrielle
> I can make dinner. Miguel
> I can water the plants. Nina

After all responses are written on the chart paper, ask the whole group to read the chart with you. Begin by reading the question and then ask each person to read his or her own sentence. If participants choose to use this activity with preschoolers, the preschooler may not be reading the words in the sentence, but will remember how they help!

The purposes of this activity are:

- To develop and practice listening skills
- To develop and practice language skills
- To develop beginning reading skills

2. Presentation of "Promoting Children's Language Development II" Content (20 minutes)

It is through language that children learn about their world and then communicate with others around them. As children talk they learn to use language and practice with words to show meaning. By age 4, most children use language appropriately. But like all development, differing experiences (family, school, community, etc.) and abilities will bring children of the same age to different language levels.

The years from 2 to 5 are especially important in the process of acquiring language, because:

- The number of words that a child knows grows from 250 words to 3,000 words.
- The child learns the rules of putting words together properly.
- The child speaks in more complex sentences.

During these years, the language that children hear adults and other children use has a significant affect on that child's overall learning progress.

Parents are children's most important teachers. Children love encouragement from their families. It is most important for a child to have individual conversations with a parent or an adult who talks about things that are important to the child.

Parents can help develop a child's language in the following ways:

- Use simple words that the child can understand.
- Listen carefully to understand the child's meaning.
- Use open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow a choice of answers rather than "yes," "no," or another specific response. For example, ask "What did you like best at the circus?" rather than "Did you like the circus?" (You can refer back to the big book, *How Can I Help?* This is an open-ended question!)

Practice using open-ended questions after reading a story: "What do you think would happen if...?" or "What would you have done?"

Use open-ended questions to encourage problem solving: "How can we solve this?" or "What could we do?"

- Talk with children often and on an individual basis to give them practice speaking about their ideas and feelings. "Tell me about this photo of your family."
- Ask children to draw a picture and then ask them to tell about the picture.

- Use puppets. Ask the child to have the puppet act out simple experiences that are familiar to the child such as brushing teeth, combing hair, and putting on shoes. Ask the child to let the puppet use words to describe what is happening.
- Use a "feely bag" or "Mystery Box." Ask the child to put his hand into the bag, feel an object, and describe it in two ways. For example, "This is something hard and round" to describe an acorn.
- Play word games. You don't have to be going on a picnic to use the popular word game. The goal is to list picnic items. *"I'm going on a picnic and I'm going to bring____,___,___and _____."* (e.g. sandwiches, potato salad, lemonade, etc.) Ask the child to join in reciting this fun rhyme and to fill in the blanks with a long list of items. This is great for rainy days or long car rides.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Begin this activity by reading *Barnyard Banter* by Denise Fleming. This is an enjoyable children's book that pairs descriptive language with imaginative illustrations. Children like the book because it offers attractive pictures of familiar barnyard animals. The animal noises within the story create a feeling for the actions and sounds of farm animals.

Ask each participant to make a puppet of a barnyard animal from the book. Read Activity 2: *Making Puppets* and have a variety of materials ready. It is important to have several models of puppets to show the group to get ideas about how to make their own puppets. Encourage them to use their creativity when designing and making their own puppets. The puppets should not all look the same.

After each participant has completed her puppet, ask the group how they could use their puppets to dramatize some of the actions in *Barnyard Banter.* One idea is to reread the story and have participants use their puppets to act out the scenes of the story complete with animal sound effects.

Next, ask the group if they can think of any ideas of how they would use puppets at home to encourage language with their preschool-age children. List each idea on chart paper for all participants to see.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)—Practice Sharing Family Stories and Asking Open-ended Questions

Family stories enrich the relationship between parent and child. Practice telling a family story to a small group during this snack period. Some ideas for stories are:

- Tell stories about special days, such as holidays and birthdays, or special events such as a trip to the park.
- Reminisce about when you were little—describe things that happened at school. Talk about your parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or friends.
- Think about a favorite photograph and talk about what was happening.
- Share your pride in your family's culture and traditions.

The listeners should think of open-ended questions to ask the storyteller when she is finished telling the story. Example, "How did you feel when you heard the crack of thunder and saw the lightening?"

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 2: Puppets

Encourage children to make puppets after reading a story. Using a puppet is an excellent way to stimulate a child's natural use of language. A parent and child will be able to explore new ideas and create many different situations with the puppets.

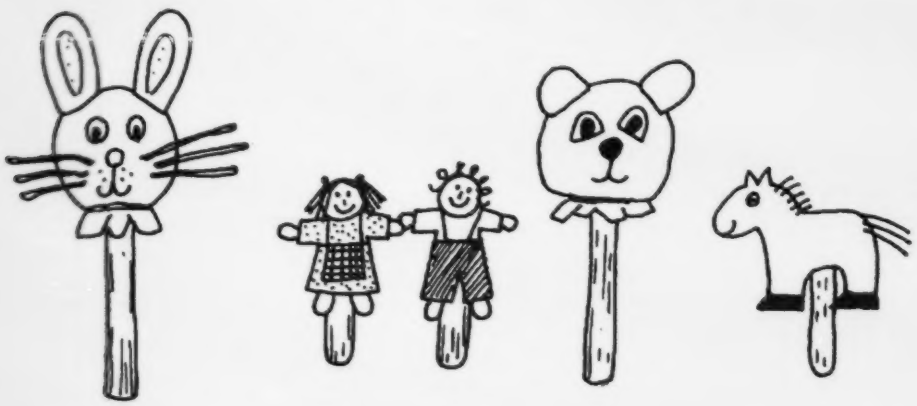
Children will act out or say things in role playing that they might not otherwise say. They will problem-solve or just have fun pretending. Puppets are great for language development and using one's imagination.

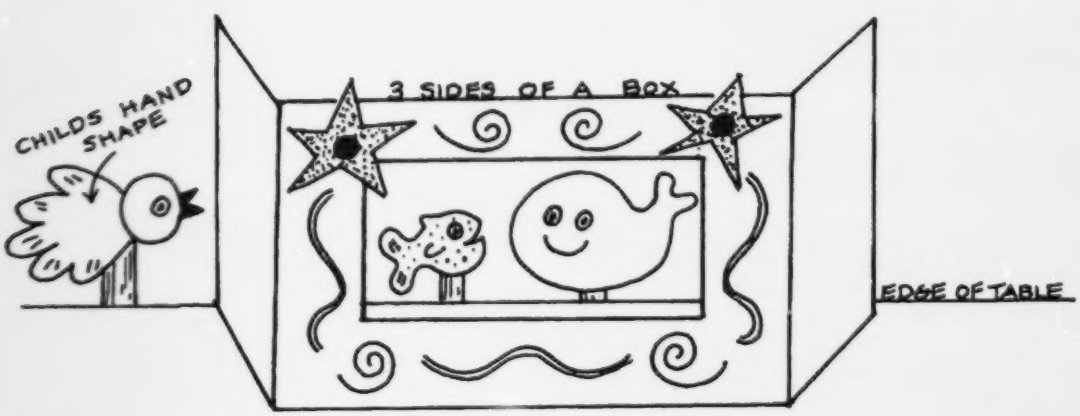
Making puppets is great fun, too. Refer participants to the *Puppets* activity in the *Activity Book*. Be creative! Parents and their children will bring their own special touches to their puppet creations. Remind parents to encourage their children to make the puppets. Only help when necessary.

Activity 2

Puppets

Literacy Learning Party #2:
Promoting Children's Language Development II





Literacy Connection

To extend literacy development throughout your child's day, find several parents to work together to build a puppet theater for your child's room.

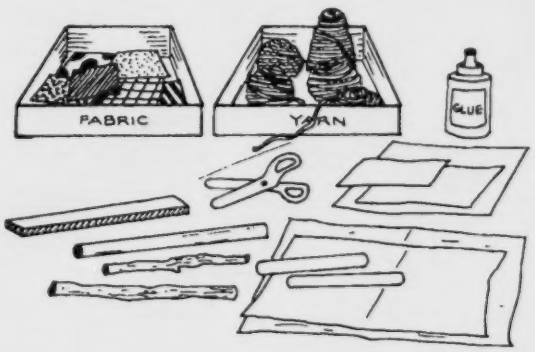
Purpose: Puppets are used for many dramatic play experiences. Whether acting out a scene from a story, reliving a life situation, or role-playing a dream, children use puppets to say out loud the things that are on their minds. Puppets stimulate a child's natural use of language. Beside the numerous language, social, and emotional benefits of using puppets in dramatic play, making puppets lets children express their creativity and imaginations. Using a variety of puppets (stick puppets, finger puppets, and bag puppets) allows for choice, encourages new situations, and adds interest.

Materials:

- sticks, large twigs, or tongue depressors
- decorations - yarn, string, buttons
- scissors
- small paper bags
- fabric scraps, paper scraps
- glue
- newspaper or cotton

Preparation:

1. A younger child can put a bag over the stick and stuff the bag with newspaper or cotton.



2. The parent helps tie the top of the bag to the stick, making a head.

3. The child can paint or glue decorations onto the head or face.

4. The child dresses the puppet by selecting scraps of paper or fabric.

5. Older children enjoy painting story characters onto durable paper. After they cut out their characters, they glue them onto cardboard and attach them to wooden sticks.

Activity: Some children are reluctant to talk at group times or story times. Almost magically, when these children are holding puppets, they will pretend that the puppet is doing the talking, and they become part of the dialogue. Here are some examples of questions and comments to facilitate language: "This baby will not sleep without a story. Can your puppet tell the baby a story?" "Which does your puppet like best for dessert—fruit, ice cream, or cake?"

Extensions and variations:

- With older children, create a stage set (a large cardboard box works well) or back drop (with a flat sheet). The children paint the scene for puppet play.

Literacy Learning Party #3: Literacy Through Play I

Purpose: Young children's play provides rich literacy experiences. This *Literacy Learning Party* offers participants useful ideas on how to create play situations that support their children's early literacy skills.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Copy the *Parent-Child Activities Survey* (Christie, et al, 1995) below to hand out to each group member.

Procedure: Give parents 10 minutes to complete the survey. Ask the group to take 5 minutes to talk with a partner about their findings, focusing on their favorite activities.

Wrap-up this activity by telling parents that they can extend their favorite activities at home. Preschoolers enjoy playing imaginary or real roles they have experienced, such as taking care of a baby, going to a bakery, or driving in a car. During these play situations, children create a world of their own and learn to negotiate real life.

2. Presentation of "Literacy Through Play I" Content (20 minutes)

Play is an essential part of early childhood. Play is children's work and children want to play. Pretend play allows children to test and modify their ideas about the world as they play. It provides children with a way to work through problems in creative ways, as well as learn how to make friends and play with others.

Young children's first pretend play activities are usually alone and spontaneous. Pretending helps them understand others through acting. Children freely dress up like people they know or have seen. This type of play encourages imitation, conversation, and the creative use of ideas through spoken language.

In dramatic play children often take on the behavior of someone else (pretending to put out a fire as a fire fighter), use an object to stand for something else (sitting on a block and pretending they are driving a "truck" through the streets), and act out familiar events (going to the market to shop for food).

All areas of a child's development are affected in dramatic play. Through play children develop:

- Problem-solving skills by trying different ways of doing things and determining the best way.
- Language skills as they talk with other children and adults.
- Social skills as they try out new roles and participate in new experiences.
- Creative abilities as they decide on the materials they would like to use and the direction of their actions.
- Self-image as they learn that they can influence others.
- Longer attention span as they increase the length of time they participate in activities.

Pretend play activities require materials such as old dress-up clothes, blocks or other building materials, and outdoor play equipment or access to a park. Parents can encourage their child's play by arranging a small play area at home (Coughlin, et al, 2000). This might be in the child's bedroom or in a corner of the living room. Young children need only simple objects to engage in role-playing. As they grow, children need more materials representing real life situations.

Ask the group if they have observed their preschoolers playing. Ask them to describe the play. What types of materials were the children using? Were they playing alone or with others? What type of development do they think the play was facilitating? Did they (the parents) join in the play?

Children's play shows their curiosity and observations about life. They act out what they know. One way to encourage preschoolers in role-playing is to offer them bakery materials to play with. Let them pretend to cook and you will hear children talking and using their natural language. They will talk, read, write, and follow directions as they make their bake goods.

To introduce the following learning activity, read aloud Laura Numeroff's, *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie.* This book uses bright illustrations and repetitive language that young children adore. The story develops when an active mouse receives a cookie.

3. Learning Activity and Group Socialization (35 minutes)

Preparation: Gather cooking utensils such as: measuring spoons and cups, a rolling pin, cookie sheets, pie pans, large bowl, and large spoons. Collect pictures of food from grocery store advertisements in the newspaper. Also, set out markers, crayons, pencils, and small slips of paper to write the recipes.

Procedure: Show parents the cooking utensils that are found in bakeries or kitchens at home. Place these utensils in a large box and take them out one by one and identify them. As each item is drawn out the box, discuss with the parents the ways it is used in cooking.

Tell parents that they will be working in four centers. Form four small groups, moving to a new center every 7-8 minutes.

- **Center 1, "Create Your Own Snack":** Provide several bowls of ingredients for parents to mix together in different ways. Let them mix their ingredients in small plastic bags. Then ask them to write or have a friend help them write their recipes on paper.

  Materials/Ingredients: dry cereals, small marshmallows, pretzels, raisins, small crackers, and M&Ms for the snack; small slips of paper and markers for writing recipes; and, plastic bags for storing the snack.

- **Center 2, "Decorate a Cupcake":** Bake enough cupcakes for each parent to decorate. Encourage parents to create their own designs and then eat their creations.

  Ingredients/Materials: cupcakes, frosting, decorations such as sprinkles, chocolate kisses, etc., and plastic knives for frosting the cupcakes.

- **Center 3, "Make a Food Collage":** Ask parents to cut out pictures of food that could be bought at the grocery store or bakery. Glue these pictures onto a large sheet of paper and display them at the end of the *Learning Party* session. The parents should discuss the food that they are gluing.

  Ingredients/Materials: food pictures from newspaper advertisements, scissors, large sheets of chart paper, and glue.

- **Center 4, "Play in the Bakery":** Let parents play with the bakery utensils. For example, they can use the rolling pin to flatten play dough or pretend to be kneading a delicious loaf of bread!

  Ingredients/Materials: measuring spoons and cups, rolling pin, cookie sheets, pie pans, large bowl, and large spoons. Provide small slips of paper to write recipes and markers, crayons and pencils for writing, and play dough for pretend baking.

Summary of Experience: As children work in these bakery centers, they are: learning to work cooperatively to make a product, practicing their early reading and writing skills, and developing language skills as they discuss the cooking experiences.

Parents have an important role in setting up a play situation. They can extend their children's play by watching what they are doing, asking open-ended questions (see *Learning Party* 2 for more information), and joining in the play session.

4. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 3: The Money Box

Dramatic play gives children the opportunity to explore introductory math concepts. Using *The Money Box* activity, children sell their real or pretend bakery products. After a trip to a local bakery, children dramatize what it would be like to have lots of customers with many items to sell in a hurry. This activity makes the connection between the real world of work and customers and pretend play.

Refer participants to *The Money Box* activity in the *Activity Book*, and handout clean yogurt cups and colored paper. Parents and children can make their money boxes at home.

Parent-Child Activities Survey

Parent's Name_____ Child's Name_____

Check those things you and your child or children do together.

_____ grocery shopping

_____ visiting the library

_____ stopping at the post office

_____ story book reading

_____ reading signs around the neighborhood

_____ running errands

_____ watching TV together

_____ cooking or baking

_____ cleaning house

_____ gardening

List other activities that you and your child do together that are not listed above.

List your favorite activities.

Adapted from: Christie, J., Roskos, K., Enz, B ., Vukelich, C., & Neuman, S. (1995). Readings for linking literacy and play. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Encuesta de las actividades comunes de los padres y los hijos

Nombre del padre_____ Nombre del niño_____

Marque las actividades que Ud. y su(s) hijo(s) hacen juntos.

_____ ir de compras al supermercado

_____ visitar la biblioteca

_____ ir al correos

_____ leer libros

_____ leer letreros por la vecindad

_____ hacer recados

_____ mirar la televisión

_____ cocinar

_____ limpiar la casa

_____ trabajar en el jardín

Haga una lista de otras actividades que no figuran en la lista que Ud. y su(s) hijo(s) hacen juntos.

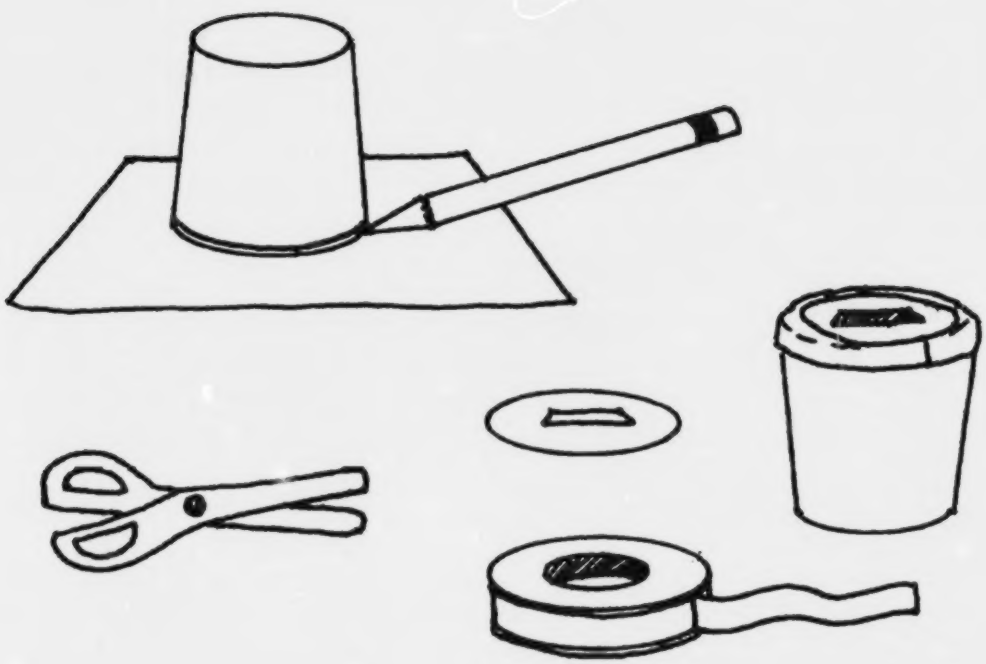
Lista de actividades favoritas.

Adapted from: Christie, J., Roskos, K., Enz, B ., Vukelich, C., & Neuman, S. (1995). Readings for linking literacy and play. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Activity 3

The Money Box

Literacy Learning Party #3:
Literacy Through Play I



Literacy Connection

There is great potential for pretend play in many ordinary household objects. You can encourage your children's creativity by pointing out simple objects (for example, a pot or a wooden spoon) and asking, "What could this be?"

Purpose: Dramatic play develops the creativity, imagination, and social skills of young children. A rich dramatic play environment frees children to express themselves and experiment with both real and fantasy situations. The money box is a prop that can be used by children in a number of different play scenarios, including a store, a post office, or a bank. As children use the money box to dramatize their experiences, they will discover their own uses for it.

Materials:

yogurt cups	tape
colored paper	glue
crayons	scissors

Preparation:

1. Measure and cut paper to fit around a yogurt cup. Let the children draw a picture or design on the paper according to their personal preferences. They can glue the paper in place so it covers the cup.

2. On paper, trace around the circular opening of the yogurt cup. Cut the paper circle and a slit that will accommodate coins or pretend money. Secure this opening on top of the yogurt cup with glue or tape.

Activity: A money box can be casually introduced to a child or group of children as they are engaged in play. This is most easily done as the parent enters into the play situation with a comment such as, "You may want to use this money box to hold your money."

Extensions and variations:

- Place some real coins for the older children in the money box. Ask the children to name them. How much is each coin worth? Are some coins of equal value? Which are worth the most, the least?

Literacy Learning Party #4:
Literacy Through Play II

Purpose: Connecting art activities with book reading is a great way to build preschool-age children's reading comprehension. This *Literacy Learning Party* shares several ways of responding to stories through artistic projects, such as creating a wax resist drawing and making play dough animals.

1. Warm-up Activity (25 minutes)

Preparation: Gather the materials for the Home Connection Activity 4: *Wax Resist*—white construction paper, crayons, watercolors, watercolor brushes, containers for water, newspaper. Also, read the book *A Color of His Own* by Leo Lionni to the group.

Procedure: Read aloud *A Color of His Own* with a strong voice. To introduce the art activity *Wax Resist*, ask the group to tell you about the colors that they saw in the book.

Give the following directions for making a wax resist:
- Press down firmly with crayons to draw a design or picture on a piece of paper.
- Paint with watercolors on and around the crayon design.
- Try to paint the entire page.

Preschoolers like to respond to stories in many different ways. One way of responding is through artistic projects. While encouraging creativity, they are also wonderful for helping to develop strength in little hands. Working with play dough also helps children strengthen their small hand muscles. Making play dough will be the focus of a later activity.

2. Presentation of "Literacy Through Play II" Content (15 minutes)

Young children spend much of their time and energy playing. They chase each other, build structures out of blocks or other building materials, act out stories, and draw pictures of people, animals, places, and things. Through play, children develop physically, socially and cognitively.

Play is fun because it involves make-believe, and focuses on an activity rather than a set learning outcome. When children include literacy activities in their play, they associate pleasurable feelings with reading and writing, which promotes a positive attitude towards learning to read and write.

Preschoolers constantly try to make sense of their world. Parents and teachers need to provide young children with a wide range of interesting ideas and activities that will build upon their understanding of the world around them.

Exploring ideas from books is a good way to foster children's literacy development. After reading or sharing a book with a child, it is important to discuss story details with them. For example, parents can discuss the characters in the story.

Reading and talking about a story encourages children to respond to books in a variety of ways. Parents should encourage their child's response to a book by making artistic creations.

Materials can be collected for next-to-nothing. Grocery stores have styrofoam and cardboard trays, and a variety of boxes. Fabric stores often donate scraps, and wallpaper stores often give away sample books. Many items can be collected from nature—rocks, seeds, leaves, nuts, tree bark, sticks. At home, there are toilet paper rolls, bottle caps, plastic soda bottles, containers of differing sizes, etc. (Coughlin, et al, 2000).

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Parents will be making play dough and making "dough models" of animals. Have available copies of the play dough recipe, ingredients, and plastic bags for group members.

Play Dough Recipe

1 cup of flour
1/2 cup of salt
1/3 to 1/2 cup of water
1 tablespoon of salad oil
food coloring
Plastic bags to store play dough

Mix flour and salt. Add water and stir well. Add 1 tablespoon of salad oil to make a smooth mix. Add several drops or food coloring for desired color.

Play dough does not harden if it is stored in a closed container or plastic bag.

Procedure:

- Read Bert Kitchen's *Animal Alphabet* and talk about the various animals—the way they move on and off the ground, what they like to eat, special features, etc.
- Ask parents to mix a batch of play dough. (It is important that there are enough ingredients available for each parent to make play dough to take home.)
- Ask the group to work with the dough, forming animal body shapes. Then add special features like wings, tails, legs, and beaks by either cutting the shape out of the dough or adding pieces to it.
- After everyone has finished their animals, ask them to talk about them, describing their special features.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)

Ask participants to discuss what they like to do after they read a book, magazine or newspaper article, etc. Do they talk with others about what they have read? Have they ever made anything after reading? Are they motivated to read more on a topic?

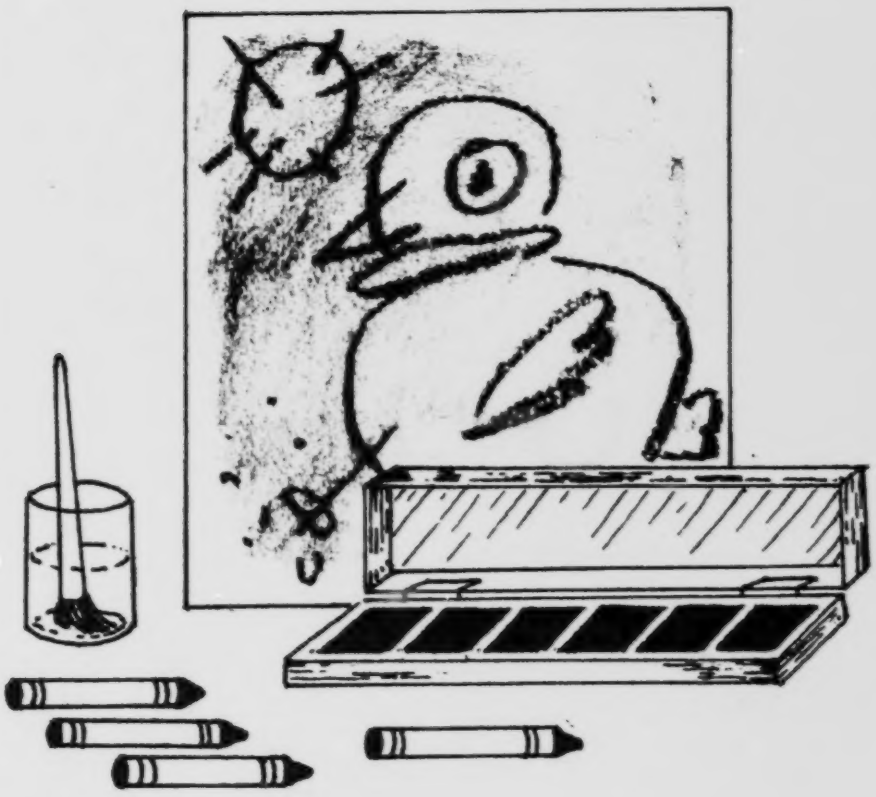
5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 4: Wax Resist

Wax Resist is an eye-opening experience for children. Parents should let their children try this project several times. Watch the spark of discovery as children explore the process using different materials. Be sure that children press the crayons firmly against the paper as they draw to create the resist effect.

Activity 4

Wax Resist

Literacy Learning Party #4:
Literacy Through Play II



Literacy Connection

Even if it does not appear polished and realistic, you should still value the art your children create and the hard work that they put into it. Display your child's artwork proudly at home. This will encourage them to be creative and take risks, both of which are important for literacy development.

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Purpose: Wax resist is an art technique in which pictures drawn with crayons are washed over with watercolors, thereby creating a "magical" effect. A wax resist is a simple project that is appropriate for younger and older children who enjoy exploring the resist process and experimenting with color, textures, designs, and drawings. This activity promotes small muscle development, decision-making, and planning skills.

Materials:

white paper	container of water
crayons	watercolors
newspapers	paint brushes

Preparation:

1. Put newspapers on the tables or floor where children will work.

2. Give each child a piece of white paper, crayons, and watercolors. Provide a container of water for rinsing paint brushes.

Activity: Ask the children to draw a design or picture on the paper with crayons. Encourage them to press firmly with the crayons. When the drawing is finished, the child paints over the picture with watercolors.

Their creations come to life after the watercolors are applied; the children will call the discovery "magic." Clarify by explaining, "Not magic, science! It happens because the wax in the crayons coats the paper and protects it from the water. The wax resists the water."

Extensions and variations:

- Instead of using watercolors, brush black ink, tempera paint, or food coloring over the entire paper.

- Create a different effect by drawing with crayons on black paper and wash over it with diluted white tempera paint.

- Connect the activity with favorite storybooks. If the book is about leaves, children can use leaves to make wax resists. Or, ask the children to make a wax resist that illustrates their favorite part of a story.

Literacy Learning Party #5: Sharing Books

Purpose: Reading to children is the single best activity to prepare young children to succeed as readers. This *Literacy Learning Party* offers participants an opportunity to learn how to select age-appropriate books and to share these books with their young children.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Prior to the session, write the following greetings on two pieces of chart paper.

1. My name is _____ and
   I'm here to say
   I hope you have a very nice day.

2. Good evening (or Good morning) friends
   Two words so nice to say
   So clap your hands
   And stomp your feet
   And let's start together this way.

   *Greetings adapted (Kriete, 1999).

Procedure: The session will begin with a short, fast-paced, enjoyable activity that will allow everyone to contribute. Ask participants to stand up and move to an open space in the room and form a circle. Have the charts displayed where everyone can see them. Each person will have a chance to say the first rhyme. The trainer begins by reciting the greeting and then moves the greeting to someone standing next to her.

After everyone has had a chance to introduce themselves with the first rhyme, read the second rhyme. As a trainer, you will want to introduce and read this rhyme as you would for preschool-age children, with a loud, entertaining voice and using active body movements. After reading this rhyme, the group will read with you and do their own clapping and stomping!

After completing both rhymes, review the purposes of the activity. The purposes are:

- To create a connection between home and the school experience
- To develop and practice language skills
- To teach children ways to enjoy reading on their own

2. Presentation of "Sharing Books" Content (20 minutes)

There is no more important activity for preparing young children to succeed as readers than reading aloud together or with an adult.

Start Young: Young children can look at pictures, listen to your voice, and point to objects on the page of a book. Adults can guide children by pointing to the picture and words and saying the names of various objects.

Read or share part of this book with the group: *Animal Alphabet* by Bert Kitchen.

By drawing attention to pictures and associating words with both pictures and real-world objects, your children will learn the importance of written language.

Learning to love books: Children learn to love the sound of language before they even notice the printed words on a page. Reading books aloud to children excites their imaginations and expands their understanding of the world. It helps them develop speaking and listening skills and prepares them to understand the written word. When the rhythm and melody of language become a part of a child's life, learning to read will be as natural as learning to walk and talk.

Read or share part of this book with the group: *Quick as a Cricket* by Audrey and Don Wood.

Show the Joy of Reading: Our goal is to motivate children to want to read so they will practice reading on their own and become fluent readers. This happens when children enjoy reading. When childcare providers and parents share great storybooks, poems, and rhymes with children each day, children begin a lifelong relationship with the printed word.

Read or share part of this book with the group: *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister.

The Reading Environment: Researchers have found that homes and schools that have lots of reading and writing materials accessible to children at all times increase children's natural interest in learning to read. Children who have been exposed to books and print from birth develop a large vocabulary of sight words as well as many reading skills.

A *variety* of books is also important for young children. Choose nursery rhymes, poetry, fairy tales, folk tales, predictable books, wordless storybooks, music books, pattern books, non-fiction, alphabet, and counting books. Easy-to-read books are great for young readers because they have a small amount of large print and illustrations that provide clues to the reader.

Read or share parts of these books with the group: (1) *El Toro Pinto and Other Songs in Spanish* by Anne Rockwell (2) *Fish Eyes* by Lois Ehlert.

With very little effort, parents and child caregivers can introduce children to the wide world of books. Listed below are some ideas presented by Jim Trelease (Trelease, 2001):

- Visit the library. Get a library card in your child's name and one for yourself if you don't have one. Go to the children's section and spend time reading and selecting books to take home. Check out books yourself to show your child that everyone can use the library and enjoy books.
- Start your own classroom or home library. Make a bookshelf or small reading area especially for children. Encourage the child(ren) to arrange the books by categories—animal books, holiday books, folk tales, etc.
- Look for inexpensive books at flea markets, garage sales, used book sales, and discount tables at bookstores. Many public libraries sell second-hand books once a year.
- Make you own books. (We'll discuss how to do this in another *Literacy Learning Party*.) The books that children make become lasting treasures.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Have at least 20-25 books on hand for participants to look at on their own. (A bibliography of books follows.) Organize the books by category. Some category suggestions are: (1) Storybooks, (2) Concept Books (i.e. color, shape, opposite, and direction books, etc.), (3) Songs, Nursery Rhymes, and Poems, (4) Counting Books, and (5) Animal Books. Place the books by category in 5 separate boxes or plastic baskets. Do not forget to put a label on each of the boxes (i.e. Storybooks, Concept Books, Counting Books...etc.).

Procedure: Place one box of books on each table. Ask the participants to stay in their groups and investigate the books — this means look at and read them! So that everyone gets to look at as many books as possible, rotate the groups every 4-5 minutes.

After twenty minutes, ask the participants to provide feedback about the books they explored. You might ask some open-ended questions, such as "What are your comments about the books?", "Which books would you like to share with your child?", "Why?"

Group Socialization (15 minutes)—Talking About Books

Talk about books while snacking on cookies and hot chocolate (or tea or coffee). Ask each participant to talk with a partner or small group about a favorite book that she or he read today. Encourage participants to explain why they chose the book.

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 5: Now Read This!

Children do not become readers overnight. They require lots of practice. Sharing a variety of "predictable" books with a young child can help in developing their early reading skills. Predictable books include repetitive or rhyming phrases that allow children to anticipate and "predict" the next sequence of events. For example, predictable books can direct children's attention to the connection between the sounds of spoken language and the marks of written language. Additionally, an adult emphasizes the association between spoken and written language by pointing to each word as it is read aloud. Refer participants to the *Now Read This!* activity in the *Activity Book* to help guide participants in their book selections and family reading times at home.

Book List for Literacy Learning Parties

Predictable Books:
**The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (Philomel Books)
**Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr. (Holt)
**Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill (Putnam)
Jump, Frog, Jump! by Robert Kalan (Greenwillow Books)

Alphabet Books:
Richard Scarry's ABC Word Book by Richard Scarry (Random House)
**Albertina Anda Arriba – Albertina Goes Up — A Spanish & English Alphabet Book* by Nancy Maria Grande Tabor (Charlesbridge)
Eating the Alphabet by Lois Ehlert (Voyager Books)
Animal Alphabet by Bert Kitchen (Dial)

Story Books:
**Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper)
**The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (North South Books)
**Corduroy* by Don Freeman (The Viking Press)
**The Napping House* by Audrey and Don Wood (Harcourt)
Salí de paseo (I Went Walking) by Sue Williams (Harcourt)

Language:
Barnyard Banter by Denise Fleming (Henry Holt & Co.)
Quick as a Cricket by Audrey and Don Wood (Child's Play Intl.)

Environmental Print:
I Read Symbols by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow)

Counting, Number Sense, Numbers:
Five Little Ducks by Raffi and illustrated by Jose Aruego (Crown)
Fish Eyes, A Book You Can Count On by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt Brace)
The Teddy Bear Number Book, Los Numeros Con Los Ositos by Margaret Kahn Garaway (Old Hogan Publishing Co.)
Ten Black Dots by Donald Crews (Greenwillow)

Cause and Effect:
**If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff (Harper)
**Rosie's Walk* by Pat Hutchins (Macmillan)

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Colors and/or Shapes:
Color Zoo by Lois Ehlert (Lippincott)
A Color of His Own by Leo Lionni (Dragonfly Books)

Songs:
Roll Over! A Counting Song by Merle Peek (Houghton Mifflin)
El Toro Pinto And Other Songs in Spanish by Anne Rockwell (Aladdin Paperbacks)

Rhyming:
Is Your Mama a Llama? by Deborah Guarino (Scholastic)
Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by Nancy Carlstrom (Macmillan)

Opposites and Direction Books:
Exactly the Opposite by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow)
Over, Under, & Through by Tana Hoban (McMillan)

Poetry/Rhymes:
Fingerplays & Songs for the Very Young by Carolyn Croll (Random House)
Mother Goose Collection: Humpty Dumpty by Rosemary Wells (Candlewick Press),

For *Learning Party* Trainers, Big Books:
How Can I Help? by Christine Hood (Creative Teaching Press)
I Am Special by Kimberly Jordano (Creative Teaching Press)

* Indicates book is available in English and Spanish

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Activity 5

Now Read This!

Literacy Learning Party #5: Sharing Books

Purpose: Books that use repetition in their language and story patterns help young children to predict or tell what happens next in the story. These books are called "predictable" books. Because prediction plays an important role in reading comprehension, predictable books are excellent to use with children who are beginning to read. Books with very predictable text help young children take risks when reading.

Materials: Select "predictable" books that use repeated language and story patterns. For example, in the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, the rhyming phrase "I see a _____ looking at me," repeats throughout the book. The illustration of the animal on each page also helps children predict the written words. There are many, many predictable books that can be found in any children's section in a library, such as:

1. **Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr. (Holt)
2. **Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (Harper)
3. *Hattie and the Fox* by Mem Fox (Macmillan)
4. **Is Your Mama a Llama?* by Deborah Guarino (Scholastic)
5. *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by Charles Shaw (Harper)

Literacy Connection

Reading helps children to develop a wide range of knowledge and supports their early reading skills and language development. Reading with your young child should always be an enjoyable experience for both of you. So, READ, READ, READ!

6. **Jump, Frog, Jump* by Robert Kalan (Greenwillow)
7. **The Napping House* by Audrey and Don Wood (Harcourt)
8. *Roll Over! A Counting Song* by Merle Peek (Clarion)
9. **Where's Spot?* by Eric Hill (Putnam)

* Also available in Spanish

Preparation:
Always read a book before reading it aloud to a young child. This way, you become familiar with the rhythm, story line, and language in the book so that you can read aloud smoothly and with feeling.

Activity: Select a predictable book to read with a young child. Introduce the book by showing the child the title of the book and then briefly discussing a few illustrations before reading. This will actively involve the child in the book right away. Ask questions like, "What do you see happening on this page?," and "What do you think will happen next?"

Read the book aloud with enthusiasm. While reading, point to the words as you say them. Pointing helps develop a connection between spoken words and written (printed) words. Stop periodically before reading a word and ask the child to predict what the word will be. If the young child makes a mistake in her prediction, tell her to look at the picture for a clue. An older preschooler might also be able to look at the first letter of the word and guess what it might be. If something is too difficult, take a break and try something easier next time.

Reread the book, inviting the child to participate in the reading. The child will learn the predictable part of the book and will soon be joining in with you each time it comes.

Extensions and variations:
- Have your child draw a picture about the story you have read. After the picture is complete, ask him to describe his drawing. Write down his description and add it to his picture. Reread the words to the child, pointing to each word as you read.

- Teach your child to hear and name the repeated word or phrases in a story. Once she gets to know the book, she may pretend to read it herself. This is a natural stage in language development and a good sign your child is on the right track to reading!

- Use different voices for the characters in the book. You can pick one character, while your child picks another.

Literacy Learning Party #6: Choosing and Sharing Books, Rhymes, and Chants

Purpose: Reading books and singing rhymes and chants helps young children learn about language, develop listening skills, acquire knowledge about the world, and further their imagination. This *Literacy Learning Party* offers participants suggestions on how to use songs, rhymes, and chants to make the most of their reading sessions.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Before the session, write the following rhyme on a piece of chart paper—

The Eentsy-Weentsy Spider*

The eentsy-weentsy spider *(walk your fingers up an imaginary spider web)*
Climbed up the water spout. *(walk your fingers up an imaginary spider web)*
Down came the rain *(flutter fingers down to show rain)*
And washed the spider out. *(make a sweeping gesture)*
Out came the sun *(bring up arms to form a circle over your head)*
And dried up all the rain. *(continue sun movement)*
And the eentsy-weentsy spider *(repeat climbing spider motion)*
Climbed up the spout again.

*Body movements in italics

Procedure: Read the rhyme to the group and demonstrate the body movements as you say the first line or phrase. On the second reading, have the group repeat the rhyme, line by line with movements. On the third reading, lead the group in reading the rhyme with movements.

Adding movements to the words of a rhyme helps young readers to quickly learn the words. As children become more familiar with the rhyme, their active participation leads to greater understanding of the words. The purposes of reading rhymes are:

- To practice and develop language skills
- To practice and develop listening skills
- To learn the sequence of a story

2. Presentation of "Choosing and Sharing Books, Rhymes, and Chants" Content (20 minutes)

Sharing books with children helps them in so many ways:

Reading helps children learn about language. They learn new words and their meanings. Children hear words in books that they don't hear in conversation. The colorful pictures in children's books give meaning to the words.

Reading to children helps to prepare them for school success. Hearing books read aloud helps children learn to listen! As they follow along, they learn that the lines or marks on the pages have meaning, an important concept for learning to read. As parents read for longer periods, children increase their attention span. Paying attention in school is essential to success in school.

Reading to children will give them new experiences. For example, children can learn about life on a farm before ever visiting one.

Reading can help children grow in their understanding of the world. Through books, children can learn about people who are different from the people they know.

Reading helps to develop a child's imagination. Books teach children to think about life creatively. By listening to stories, they can imagine other possibilities for their own lives.

Reading makes parenting easier. Once a child has learned to enjoy reading, books provide a pleasurable activity for parents and children to do together.

Reading can be a joy! This is the best reason of all. Books can be funny, sad, relaxing, etc. Enjoy this treat with your children.

When thinking about reading with preschoolers, parents can use the following suggestions found in *Read for Joy!* to make the most of their book-reading sessions (Quigg, 1993):

Make sharing books, songs, and rhymes a regular part of your day. Let children share in the reading by helping you choose books, turn pages, and talk about their impressions.

Encourage children to help you read. As parents read stories, children will want to be actively involved in the reading. Many books invite children to participate. Some books ask questions, others have flaps or tabs to pull. A few books encourage children to poke, squeeze, or sniff as they read. *Where's Spot* by Eric Hill is a book that preschoolers enjoy.

(Read parts of this book with the group.) Encourage children to join you as you point and name items in the pictures, make animal noises, sing, laugh, and have fun.

Pick books that you and your child enjoy. Try a variety of books—quiet, silly, soothing, etc. Experiment to find books with the right amount of wording per page that fit the child's current attention span. As preschoolers get older they will be able to sit and listen to longer books.

Pick a quiet place to read. A quiet place helps a child think about the book being read rather than the noise outside.

Read predictable books. Preschool children love stories with repetition. Many books repeat the same words over and over again. Young children learn these repetitive lines and enjoy saying them as they are read. In *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle, they will quickly learn this line: *"On Monday he ate through one apple. But he was still hungry."* (Read parts of this book with the group.) Being able to recite lines like this will make a child feel good about himself.

Get close when you read. Preschoolers need closeness and cuddling. Reading times help parents and children stay close. Parents can hold their preschoolers as they read. Books provide preschoolers with the quiet times they need in their busy lives. Further, reading to preschoolers at bedtime will encourage good bedtime habits. Bedtime books such as *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown is a calm ending to the day. (Read parts of this book with the group.)

Read books over and over again. Most young children who love books have favorites. Sometimes a child will pick out one book to hear over and over. Parents may get tired of reading the same book, but the child does not.

Why would a child want to hear a book she has memorized? Maybe it makes her feel "smart" to know all the words. Maybe she likes keeping things predictable or feeling connected with a familiar book.

Parents should be happy when their child loves a certain book. They can be sure that their child is learning to love reading. Continue reading a child's favorite book, but read others too. Soon the new ones will become favorites too.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Preschoolers love the predictable rhythm and rhyme of chants and action songs. The body movements suggested for these songs and chants are especially fun for young children. As preschoolers grow more familiar with the words in the songs and chants, they will pay more attention to the printed words. Through songs and chants, young

children learn that printed words match spoken language.

Preparation: Copy the four songs and chants and give them out. (Songs are included in both English and Spanish.)

Procedure:

- Tell the group that they will be learning several songs and chants. Divide the group into 3 or 4 small groups, giving each group a different song or chant.

- Tell the groups that it is their job to read the song or chant, become familiar with the words, and develop the actions to go along with the words.

- After about 12 minutes have passed and the groups have practiced their songs and chants, ask for a volunteer group to share with the large group, combining the rhyme and actions. This "sharing" demonstrates active reading!

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)

While group members are snacking, ask them to comment on the ideas shared earlier in this *Learning Party*. Ask group members to talk with each other about their favorite reading times with their children. Some ideas for discussion include:

- favorite books their children have
- situations where they have seen their children "pretend reading"
- other related reading comments

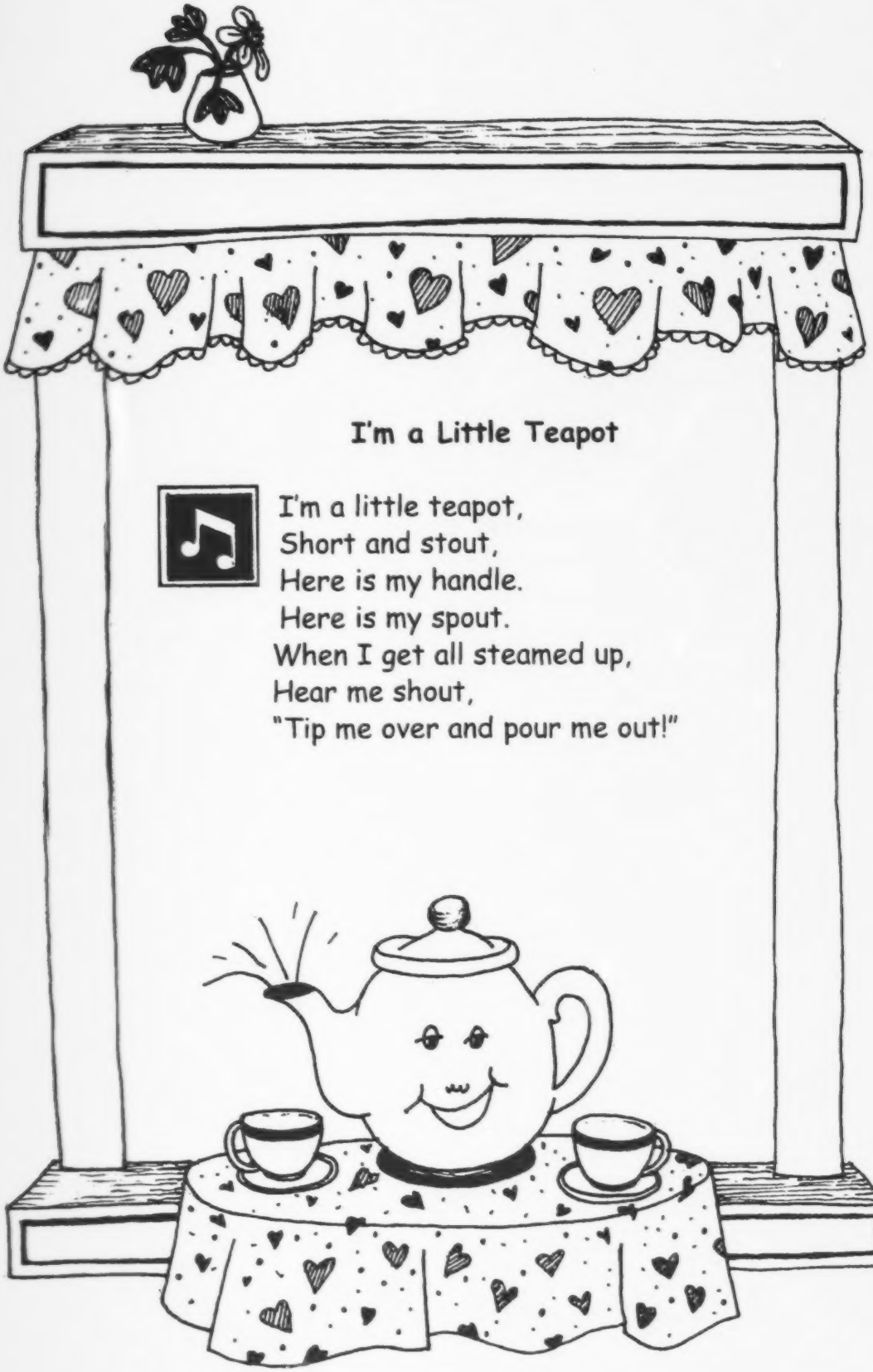
5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 6: Gardeners

As children become experienced "active readers," their participation in the reading process grows in the following ways: (1) their understanding deepens, (2) their thinking expands, and (3) they learn from new information.

A great activity related to *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert is to plant seeds or a small plant with a child. The *Gardeners* activity offers children a meaningful way to draw out their ideas by actually growing a plant from seed. Remind parents to help their children plant the seeds and care for their plants. Ask children, "What kinds of things grow in a garden?" Invite them to talk about what step comes first, next, and last when planting.

Snowflakes

Snowflakes whirling all around,
All around, all around.
Snowflakes whirling all around
Until they cover the ground.



I'm a Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot,
Short and stout,
Here is my handle.
Here is my spout.
When I get all steamed up,
Hear me shout,
"Tip me over and pour me out!"

Five Little Monkeys

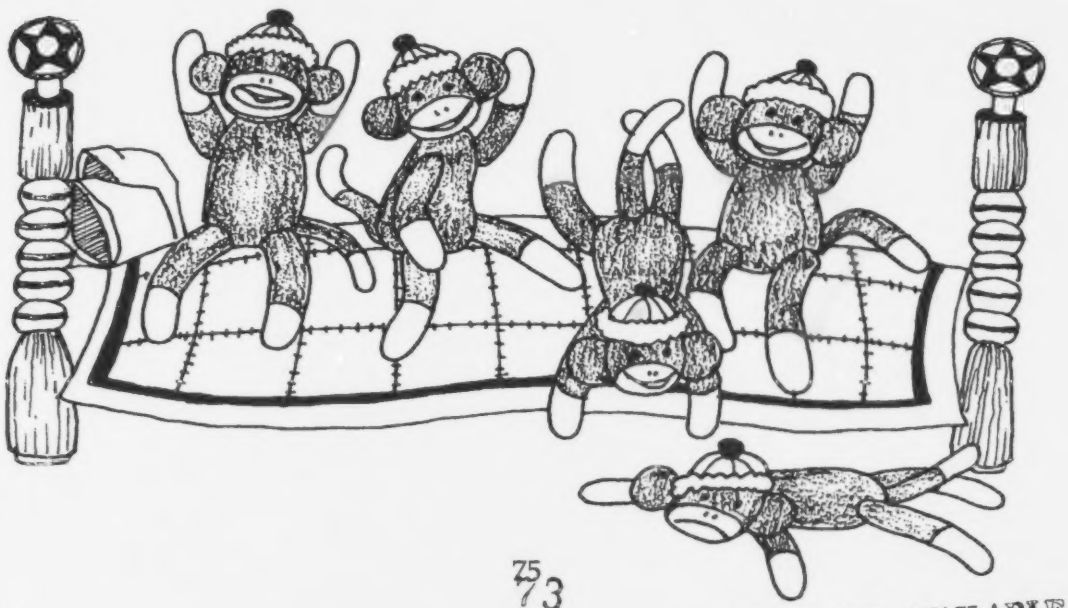
Five little monkeys
Jumping on the bed.
One fell off
And bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"That's what you get for
Jumping on the bed!"

Four little monkeys
Jumping on the bed.
One fell off
And bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"That's what you get for
Jumping on the bed!"

Three little monkeys
Jumping on the bed.
One fell off
And bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"That's what you get for
Jumping on the bed!"

Two little monkeys
Jumping on the bed.
One fell off
And bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"That's what you get for
Jumping on the bed!"

One little monkey
Jumping on the bed.
He fell off
And bumped his head.
Mama called the doctor,
And the doctor said,
"No more monkeys jumping on
the bed!"



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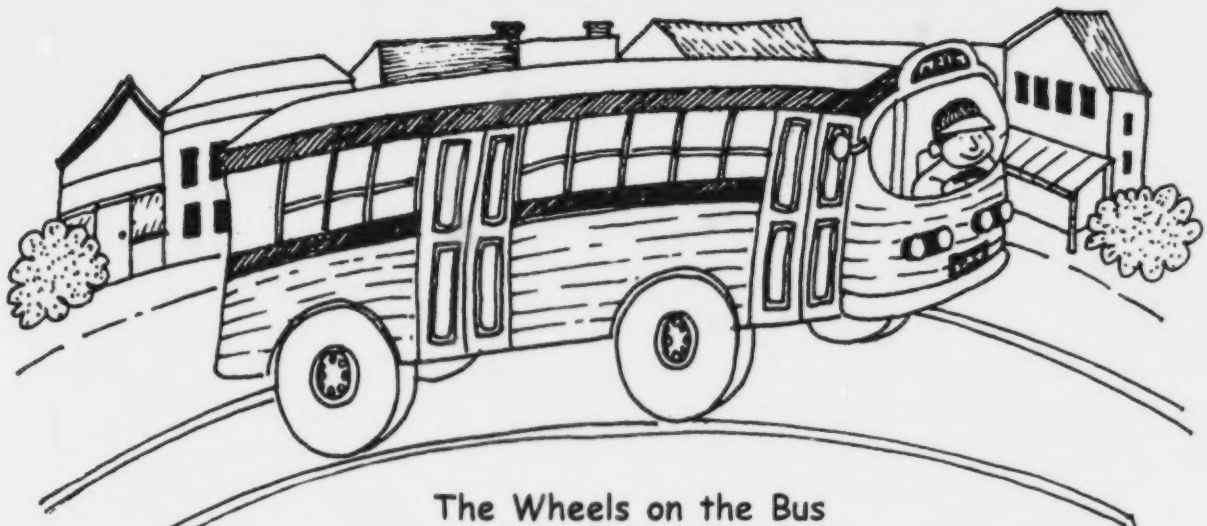


The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus
Go round and round,
Round and round,
Round and round.
The wheels on the bus
Go round and round,
All through the town!

The doors on the bus
Go open and shut,
Open and shut,
Open and shut.
The doors on the bus
Go open and shut,
All through the town!

The driver on the bus
Goes, "Move on back!"
"Move on back!"
"Move on back!"
The driver on the bus
Goes, "Move on back!"
All through the town!

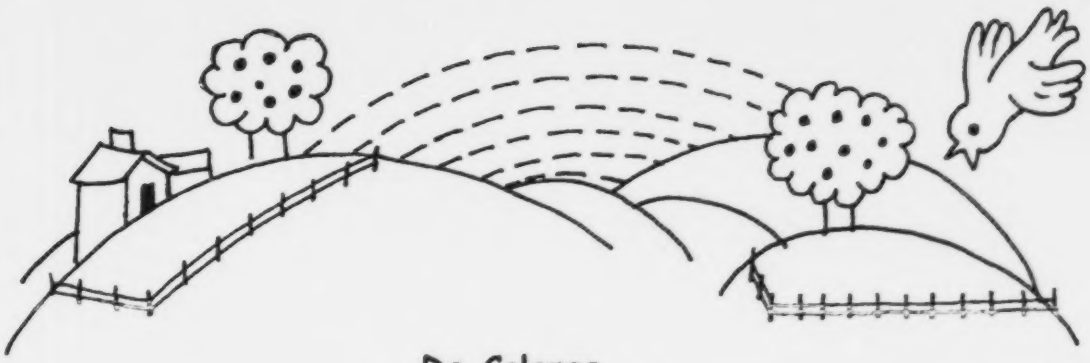
The people on the bus
Go up and down
Up and down
Up and down

The people on the bus
Go up and down
All through the town!

The babies on the bus
Go, "Wah! Wah! Wah!"
"Wah! Wah! Wah!"
"Wah! Wah! Wah!"
The babies on the bus
Go, "Wah! Wah! Wah!"
All through the town!

The mommies on the bus
Go, "Shh, shh, shh!"
"Shh, shh, shh!"
"Shh, shh, shh!"
The mommies on the bus
Go, "Shh, shh, shh!"
All through the town!

The wipers on the bus
Go swish, swish, swish
swish, swish, swish
swish, swish, swish
The wipers on the bus
Go swish, swish, swish,
All through the town!



De Colores

De colores
De colores se visten los campos
En la primavera.
De colores
De colores son los pajarillos
Que vienen de afuera.
De colores
De colores es el arco iris
Que vemos lucir.

Y pos eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores
Me gusta a mí.
Canta el gallo,
Canta el gallo con el
Kiri, kiri, kiri, kiri, kiri.
La gallina
La gallina con el
Cara cara cara cara cara.
Los pollitos,
Los pollitos con el pío,
pío, pío, pío, pí.
Y por eso los grandes
amores
De muchos colores
Me gustan a mí.

Y pos eso los grandes
amores
De muchos colores
Me gustan a mí.

Un elefante se balanceaba

Un elefante se balanceaba
Sobre la tela de una araña,
Cuando veía que resistía
Fueron a llamar a otro elefante.

Dos elefantes se balanceaban
Sobre la tele de una araña,
Cuando veían que resistía
Fueron a llamar a otro elefante.

Tres elefantes se balanceaban
Sobre la tele de una araña
Cuando veían que resistía
Fueron a llamar a otro elefante.

Cuatro elefantes...
Cinco elefantes...

El barco chiquito

Era una vez un barco chiquitito,
Era una vez un barco chiquitito,
Era una vez un barco chiquitito
Que no podía, que no podía, no podía navegar.

Pasaron una, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis,
Siete semanas,
Pasaron una, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis,
Siete semanas,
Pasaron una, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis,
Siete semanas,
Y los víveres, y los víveres empezaron a escasear.

Los marineros de este barquito,
Los marineros de este barquito,
Los marineros de este barquito,
Se pusieron, se pusieron, se pusieron a pescar.

Pescaron peces grandes, medianos y pequeños,
Pescaron peces grandes, medianos y pequeños,
Pescaron peces grandes, medianos y pequeños,
Y se pusieron, y se pusieron, y se pusieron a cenar.

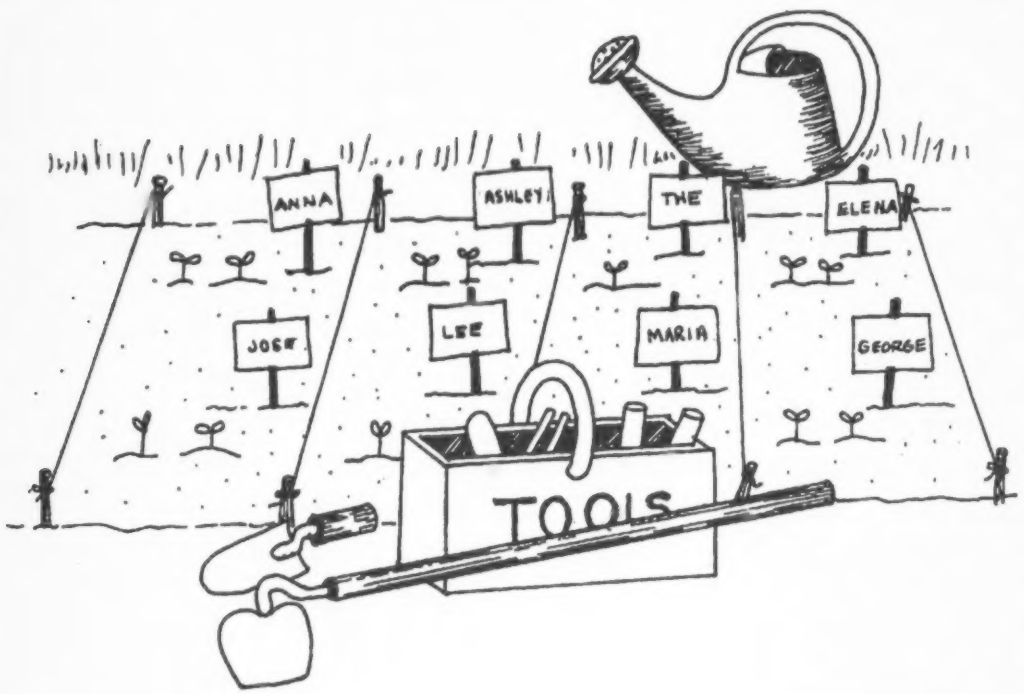
Estaba la pájara pinta

Estaba la pájara pinta
Sentada en un verde limón,
Con el pico recoge la hoja
Con la hoja recoge la flor.
¡Ay, ay, ay! ¿Dónde estará mi amor?

Activity 6

Gardeners

Literacy Learning Party #6:
Choosing and Sharing Books, Rhymes, and Chants



Literacy Connection

Plant a seedling or seeds with your child. With your help, the child can tend the plant and take responsibility for it. Ask your child, "What kind of things grow in a garden?" Invite them to talk about what step comes first, next, and last when planing. Read books about gardening and nature with your child.

Purpose: Planting seeds and tending plants is a wonderful learning activity for children of all ages. Gardening can take place either indoors or outdoors. Gardening teaches the elements necessary for growth and sustaining plant life. It also exposes children to concepts such as change, size, shape, and color. Children will learn responsibility and enjoy the rewards of their efforts. They will also learn how seasons affect the garden. They watch the garden during each season and discover the differences.

Materials:

Indoors	**Outdoors**
containers for plants	gardening tools
pebbles	seeds or plants
soil	watering can, hose, or buckets for water
large spoons	string and sticks to mark off sections
water	
seeds or plants	

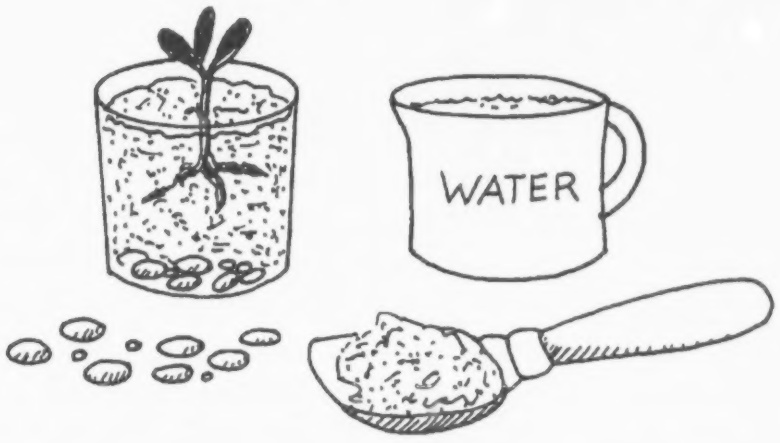
Preparation:

For indoor planting:

1. Each child should put pebbles in the bottom of a container for drainage and fill the container with damp soil.

2. Plant seeds of herbs (chives, thyme, parsley, or basil), other house plants, or flowers. Cover lightly with soil and pat gently.

3. Water and set the plant containers on a sunny window sill.



Activity 6

Gardeners (continued)

Literacy Learning Party #6: Choosing and Sharing Books, Rhymes, and Chants

For outdoor planting:

1. Find an available outdoor space where children can grow herbs, vegetables, or flowers. Give each child a small space rather than a large one.

2. Have on hand a variety of gardening materials: child-sized garden tools (shovel, rake, hoe, etc.); seeds or plants; access to water (watering cans, hoses, or buckets); string and sticks to mark off the rows or sections.

Activities for indoor gardens: Encourage the children to make their own herb garden containers. Teachers can offer guidance when asked, but let the children make their own decisions about how and what to plant.

Make a few extra plantings. Place a few plants away from the sunlight. Take two different plants and do not give them water. Ask the children if they notice a difference in the growth of the plants in the sun, away from the sun, and without water. Ask, "What do seeds need to grow and live? Do all seeds sprout at the same time?" Help the children notice that the seeds grow in a similar way, but each is a little different. "Can you think of other living things that grow in a similar way, but each of which is a little different?"

Activities for outdoor gardens: A successful garden takes some advance planning. Find a flat place outdoors that has at least 5 hours of sun each day. A 2.5 m. x 2.5 m. area will allow space for several different plants, but a smaller space will do. Add fertilizer or compost to the soil.

Have the children use the gardening tools to plant flowers, vegetables, and herbs. Ongoing maintenance is a must when working in a garden. Encourage cooperative play among small children when weeding, watering, and harvesting. Take time to smell fragrant scents or to admire the brightly colored flowers.

Promote children's thinking by asking questions such as, "Why do you think plants grow toward the light? What do plants need in order to grow?"

Extensions and variations:

- Take children on a field trip to a nursery, greenhouse, farm, or home garden.
- See what lives in the garden soil. Curiosity will be high when earthworms and other soil creatures are found. Look at the soil with a magnifying glass.
- Use graphs to record how long seeds take to sprout. Measure the growth of plants, compare their sizes and shapes.
- Ask a family member who likes to garden to talk to the children about gardening. What is her favorite thing to grow and why? Why does she enjoy gardening? Why is gardening useful to a family?

Literacy Learning Party #7: Engaging Children in Writing I

Purpose: Early writing begins with children sketching lines and scribbles in an attempt to imitate adult writing. This *Literacy Learning Party* helps participants understand the importance of supporting early writing experiences and demonstrates how to make writing books for children's use at home.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Prior to this *Literacy Learning Party,* read the big book, *I Am Special* by Kimberly Jordano. It is always a good idea to familiarize yourself with books before reading them aloud to others. Also make enough copies of the handout below with the sentence starter, "I can_____." Have art materials such as markers, crayons, or paints ready for use.

Procedure: Introduce the story by reading the title and asking the group what they think the story will be about. The purpose of the introduction is to get the group to use their own personal knowledge to connect with the story. Then ask, "What is the young girl doing on the front cover?" This question should begin a discussion about the book's cover. You are asking the group to guess what might happen in the story based on the picture clues.

Read aloud *I Am Special* using a strong and clear voice. Point to each word as you read it. The enlarged text and movement of your finger will show the group how to read with young children.

After reading, ask the group to tell you how they are special. Make sure everyone has a turn to speak!

Finally, pass out the handouts and ask each person to draw a picture of themselves doing something special. Ask them to finish the sentence "I can_____." using large printed words. If they are unable to complete the sentence, have a neighbor help them. It is OK to ask for help, since that is what we want children to do.

After everyone has completed their drawings, select a place to display them in the meeting room or in a hallway for all to see. Tell the participants it is important to display children's work. They find particular joy in seeing their works of art displayed at home and in their preschool.

The purposes of this activity are:

- To develop and practice language skills
- To develop early writing skills
- To develop early reading skills

2. Presentation of "Engaging Children in Writing I" Content (20 minutes)

Your home is full of wonderful literacy opportunities. Every day, you and your children see and use written and spoken words as you cook, plan the day, read the mail, and do the household chores. Today we will talk about how to use these opportunities in meaningful ways that will help children learn how letters, sounds, and words are used.

Signs and Charts. A label and picture on a container give children important information that tells where to find the crayons and where to put them away. A chart informs children that it is their turn to feed the pet fish or set the table.

Prewriting. (Show Photo 7 of early writing) Early writing begins with "pretend writing," as children draw lines and scribbles in an attempt to imitate adults' writing. As young children learn the alphabet and the sounds that letters make, some children will attempt to spell words based on the sounds of the letters. For example, they might write *"bs"* for *"bus"*.

Adults can encourage the development of early writing in several ways:

Set up activities that use the children's hand muscles. Children develop small muscles in their hands by: cutting small pieces of paper, using lacing cards, tracing letters, working with clay, etc.

Encourage children to write. You should have all kinds of writing instruments—markers, crayons, pencils, and pens—ready for children to use. There should also be a supply of different kinds of paper. Children love to write on catalogs, junk mail, envelopes, and magazines. A blackboard and chalk are also exciting to young children. Give children flattened paper grocery bags to write and draw on or paper stapled together to make books.

Teach children to write their names. Encourage the child to write, trace letters of his name and to play pretend writing. Write the child's name often for him to see—on artwork, on clothing, in the sand or snow. The child can "write" out grocery lists, letters, and stories. Show children how to write and spell words whenever they show interest.

Have children keep a daily journal. Encourage your child to keep a daily journal where he or she writes and draws their ideas about stories. The journal can include pictures they draw about their day, with their "pretend writing" underneath the pictures. You can write out the children's sentences in the journal.

Read back what the children have "written". Ask the child what his note or journal page is about and pretend to read it back. Encourage your child to "read" his writing to you.

Write down the children's ideas and hang them up in your home. Ask your child to tell her story of a trip to the grocery store, post office, or park. Hang up a list of your child's favorite foods, or toys, or games.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

The group will be making blank books for their children's use at home. Books will be made in different sizes, shapes, and materials. See Activity 7: *A Book About Me* activity for additional book-making ideas. Make a few blank books as samples to share with the group. Blank books should not be more than 10 pages for preschool-age children. Titles can be added to the cover of the book at home with the child.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)—A Book-making Party

Continue the book-making activity throughout the group socialization time, allowing the group to make extra blank books for their children. Since preschoolers are most interested in themselves, ask participants to think of topics their children would like to write about. Give some examples of book topics such as: My Trip to Grandmother's House, Going to the Store with Dad, My Dog, My Baby Sister, All About Me, etc.

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 7: A Book About Me

Refer participants to the *A Book About Me* activity in the *Activity Book*. At home parents can help suggest a book topic that their child is interested in. For example: families, favorite foods, animals, toys, etc. Children can paint, draw, or paste pictures on the pages. Children will cherish these books and will want to read them (or look at them) over and over!

"I Can" Handout

Literacy Learning Party #7:
Engaging Children in Writing I

I can _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Photo 7

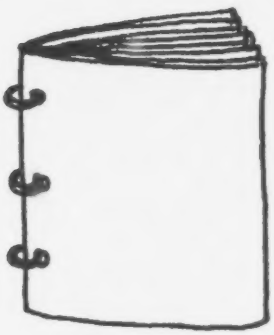
Early Writing

Literacy Learning Party #7

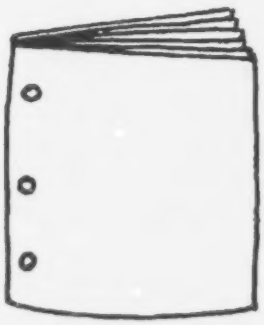
Activity 7

A Book About Me

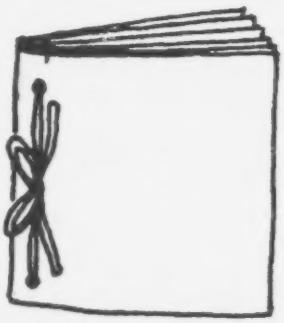
Literacy Learning Party #7:
Engaging Children in Writing I



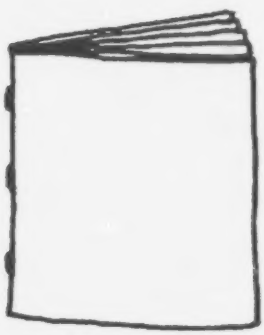
RINGS



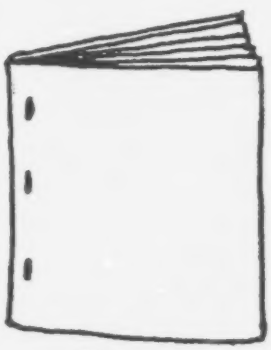
BRADS



STRING



STAPLE



STAPLE

Literacy Connection

Suggest a book-making meeting for several parents in your neighborhood, at which the parents will make blank books for children to use to create their own stories. (See the list of materials that parents will need to make the books.) If possible, have refreshments available to make this an opportunity for people to get to know one another and build spirit.

Purpose: Literature gives children new insights and understanding. It stimulates thinking and language development. To encourage a love of books, read to children every day and plan opportunities for children to make their own books. This activity provides a chance for choices as children select their own topics and build on their own interests. The activity also invites children to think about different ways of assembling books. Making books with children allows parents to customize content for any area of interest. "A Book About Me" fits with the study of personal growth as children look back to their younger years. In this way, a child begins to appreciate changes in nature and growth over time.

Materials:

- thick colored paper
- scissors
- stapler
- rubber bands
- cardboard
- markers, crayons, paint
- cord or yarn
- glue
- hole puncher
- paper fasteners
- old magazines, catalogs, greeting cards, etc.

Preparation:

1. After the blank books are prepared, children fill the pages in their books. Take a photo of each child for the book cover and paste it onto cardboard.

2. As the children learn about color, seasons, measurement, senses, and physical growth, they add new drawings, pictures, and words to their books.

Activity: Explain to the children that they will be making "A Book About Me." Each book will be a little different because each person is unique, but all people are alike in many ways, too. "What are some ways we are all alike?" Over time, some of the activities that might be included in the book are handprints, footprints, fingerprints; how many members in my family; color of my eyes; my favorite color; a story about me when I was a baby; my favorite thing to do. The children can dictate to the parent and draw pictures to accompany the narrative.

When the books are completed, place them in your child's room for the child to look at and share. The activity helps children build a positive approach to differences as they gain greater awareness and understanding of their own characteristics and those of their friends.

Activity 7

A Book About Me (continued)

Literacy Learning Party #7:
Engaging Children in Writing I

90

Extensions and variations:

- Prepare several samples of different shape books. Children choose the shape and topic for the books. Some suggestions may be helpful: people, numbers, cars, airplanes, animals, fruits, vegetables, faces, pets, etc. Make a front and back cover for the younger children and fill it with several blank pages.

- Older children may, with help, select and cut their own shapes and choose their own titles and topics. They cut and paste selected pictures onto the blank pages. Younger children may want to dictate stories for adults to write.

- Give the children a choice of different ways to fasten the pages of their book. For example, they may choose to staple or sew their books together with yarn or thread.

- Have children make a book of numbers that are important to them. These can include their ages, house or apartment numbers, number and ages of people in their families, favorite numbers, birthdays, etc.

Literacy Learning Party #8: Engaging Children in Writing II

Purpose: Writing short stories with preschool-age children is a great way to foster reading and writing skills. This *Literacy Learning Party* helps participants learn how to encourage children's early writing efforts.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Collect white paper, pencils, crayons, and markers before the *Learning Party*.

Procedure: Ask parents whether they have ever received a greeting card or letter. Ask how these written notes made them feel.

The warm-up activity today is to write a short note to your child. The notes of one to three sentences can say anything that would make their child feel good. Let parents make the note special by decorating it with artwork. After parents have finished writing, ask several members of the group to share their notes.

Encourage parents to repeat this activity at home with their children. Parents and children can make special cards for other members of the family.

The purposes of this activity are:

- To practice early writing
- To practice early reading
- To use writing to communicate thoughts

2. Presentation of "Engaging Children in Writing II" Content (20 minutes)

A child's home is probably the most important place for learning. Furthermore, the family plays a big role in supporting early literacy. Family members are the child's first teachers and set the course for future success in learning. Any time family members spend time talking, reading, and sharing stories, they are encouraging literacy.

Without much interaction with adults, preschoolers quite naturally:

- Draw and write with pencils, crayons, and markers
- See printed words and messages around them
- Watch adults read and write
- Copy shapes and some letters

There are many different things that parents can do to help preschoolers learn to read and write. These activities will not teach children to read, but will build literacy skills. Here are a few simple ideas that help preschoolers learn about the world around them:

Provide a variety of writing tools. They should include: papers, pencils, crayons, markers, even paints and paint brushes.

Offer children different types of printed material. Provide books, magazines, catalogs, newspapers, menus, scrap paper, etc. to write on during pretend play.

Encourage children to keep a journal. Even before they can write, children can draw a picture of something they did or would like to do. Ask children to describe the picture they have drawn in their journal, then parents can write their words under the picture.

Write down a child's stories. Sometimes these stories are only 3 sentences long. For example, "I went to the grocery store. We bought cereal. I helped Mommy carry the bag into the house." Because their stories have special meaning to them, children will return to them over and over.

Encourage children to read their "scribbles" to you. The scribbles or random lines may not resemble anything you can read, but your child is beginning to understand that written lines or letters make up words and have meaning.

When children and an adult talk together about real-life events, they explore ideas and feelings through language. If an adult writes down the experience in the children's own words, a powerful *"language experience"* is created.

Examples of a *language experience* are:

- Retelling a story from a book (i.e. Jack had dinner early. Father played with Kate.)
- Describing thoughts, feelings, and interests (i.e., I feel happy when I see my friend Christina.)
- Comparing and contrasting ideas (i.e., Big foot, little foot, or red ball, green ball)
- Summarizing a real-life event (i.e., I saw a little blue bird sitting in a tree at the park.) (Williams, 1992)

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Begin the activity by asking the group questions to get them thinking about the book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The purpose of asking these questions is to focus the group's attention on their previous experiences and ideas that relate to this book. Here is a short list of open-ended questions that will promote discussion:

- What kinds of food do people eat when they are hungry?
- What kinds of food do you think a caterpillar eats?
- What is the sequence of daily events in your life? For example, what do you do first thing in the morning, second, next, and later in the day?

Next tell the group that you will be reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* After reading the story aloud, tell them that they will be making their own *Very Hungry Caterpillar* books.

Tell group members to select what their caterpillar will eat—cars, street signs, fruit—it does not have to be the same as in the book and it can be as imaginative as you like. There are no rules for how long each person's book has to be. Some parents may choose to write and illustrate 3 pages, while another parent may write 7 pages. Remind parents to add a cover to their books with the book title and author listed. Each book will be different and unique!

At the end of the activity session, celebrate the authors by reading the books in small groups.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)

Each member of the group will enjoy a snack can of fruit salad while talking about *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* At home, parents and their children can make a *Very Hungry Caterpillar* fruit salad!

Here is the recipe:

Very Hungry Caterpillar Fruit Salad

1 Apple
2 Pears
4 Strawberries
3 Plums
5 Oranges

Peel, pare, seed, and section each fruit. Cut the fruit into bite-sized pieces. Then put everything together in a big bowl and chill. Serve a small group of children after reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.*

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 8: Pressed Leaf Book

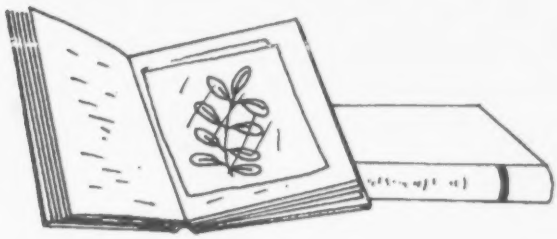
Making a pressed leaf book with young children is an excellent way to help children link spoken words to printed words. Refer participants to the *Pressed Leaf Book* activity in the *Activity Book* and explain that the outdoors is a wonderful place to reinforce concepts such as size, shape, color, and texture. Since the leaves are turning colors, this is an excellent activity for the Fall.

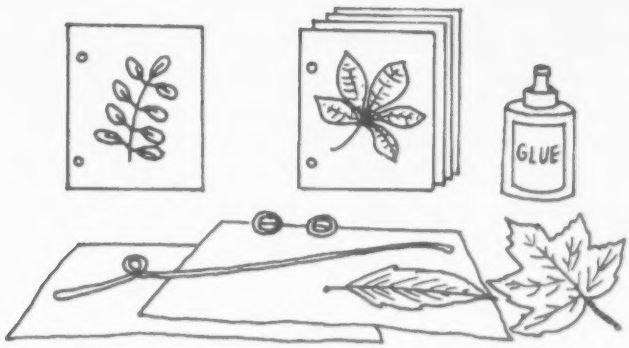
The activity can change at other times of the year. For example, parents can go on a nature walk and collect tree bark, acorns, small rocks, sticks, and seeds and glue them on a page. The key to this activity is making it suitable to the child's interests. Don't forget to record the child's words on paper —"It's bumpy and brown."

Activity 8

Pressed Leaf Book

Literacy Learning Party #8: Engaging Children in Writing II





Purpose: Children learn through direct interaction with tangible objects. The outdoors is a wonderful place to learn and reinforce concepts such as color, shape, texture, and size. Comparing the characteristics of leaves and making a pressed leaf book furthers the young child's conceptual knowledge base. The children also learn that falling leaves are a characteristic of autumn.

Literacy Connection

Spend time looking at books with your child. Try to ask questions, listen, and be receptive to you child's comments.

Materials:

heavy book	wax paper
glue	brightly colored leaves, including green
white paper	metal rings or string

Preparation:

1. Before pressing the leaves in the heavy book, put the leaves in-between wax paper or paper towels to prevent staining the book.

2. Place the leaves between the pages of the book. Find heavy objects to place on top of the book to press the leaves.

3. To make the leaf book, cut pages of equal size and shape and assemble the book (see illustration).

Activity: Take a "leaf walk" and encourage the children to examine the different textures and colors of leaves and then bring them back for further handling and examination. Place some of the leaves on display, and ask each child to select a leaf to be pressed and added to their leaf book.

After the leaves have been pressed, glue them on a page. Write down the child's words under each leaf: "This is a red, bumpy leaf." "This leaf looks like a star."

Older children can write their names. Children will look at their leaf books over and over.

Extensions and variations:

- Make leaf rubbings. Place a leaf with its vein-side up under a piece of white paper and rub lightly over the paper with a soft pencil or crayon. Or make leaf prints by pressing a leaf on an ink pad with the vein-side down. Position it on a clean piece of paper. Cover the leaf with another sheet of paper and make the print by gently rubbing with fingertips.

- Flowers can also be pressed and made into a book. Select flowers of varying colors, shapes, and sizes and discuss these attributes with the children.

- Press leaves between sheets of wax paper and iron the paper lightly to seal it. (For safety, be sure an adult helper manages the ironing activity.) Ask the children what caused the wax paper to stick together. Hang the translucent art at the window so that the leaves appear to be falling from the sky.

Literacy Learning Party #9: Early Reading Strategies—Learning the Alphabet Letters and Sounds

Purpose: Learning the names and sounds of alphabet letters is a predictor of early reading success. Preschool children can begin to explore letters and sounds in a variety of ways. This *Literacy Learning Party* assists participants in learning how to create fun, alphabet-letter activities.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)—Personal Name Tag

Preparation: Provide materials (8 1/2" x 11" paper, glue, scissors, ribbon, and other collage-type items) for each parent to make his/her own nametag.

Procedure: Ask parents to fold the 8 1/2" x 11" paper lengthwise and then print their first name (ex., Ellen) in large letters on one side of the name tag, and on the other side draw and decorate a picture of an animal with the same beginning letter sound as in their first name (ex., elephant).

After the nametag projects are complete, give each parent a turn to introduce him- or herself and give the first letter of his or her name. Then ask each person to show his or her animal picture. On chart paper, record each parent's name and animal. For example, Ellen—elephant, Poncho —pig, etc. Underline the first letter of each person's name and stress the beginning sounds.

Though most preschool-age children are just beginning to learn the letters in their names, an adult can help with this simple activity. The importance of this activity is:

- To learn to distinguish the alphabet letters
- To learn the unique sound of each letter
- To learn that printed words have meaning

2. Presentation of "Early Reading Strategies—Learning the Alphabet Letters and Sounds" Content (20 minutes)

Alphabet books can be used with children of all ages and levels of development. Ranging from simple books with one word for each letter like *26 Letters and 99 Cents* by Tana Hoban, to more sophisticated books like *Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert, alphabet books fall into categories, such as labeled objects, information, and stories.

With very young children, use alphabet books to recognize letters, hear letter sounds, (letter-sound correspondence), and engage in language play. With young children who have more developed reading skills, the focus will be on the content and developing reading skills. For children at all levels, alphabet books expand vocabulary.

Use the following alphabet books with the group. Read several pages from each of these books to give the group a sense of the variety and differing styles of alphabet books. Encourage parents to compare the language, artwork, design, and format of the different books:

Information alphabet book—*Alphabet Times Four: An International ABC* by Ruth Brown (E.P Dutton). This book presents information.

Labeling alphabet book—*Eating the Alphabet* by Lois Ehlert (Harcourt);
Richard Scarry's ABC Word Book by Richard Scarry (Random House);
26 Letters and 99 Cents by Tana Hoban (Greenwillow). These books expand children's language and help them to make letter and sound connections.

Language development alphabet book—*A is for Angry An Animal and Adjective Alphabet* by Sandra Bonyton (Workman). This book helps to expand children's language.

Story alphabet book—*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin, Jr. (Simon & Schuster). This book uses the alphabet to tell a story.

Young "beginning" readers rely on pictures to give clues about a story. Alphabet books are simple and the pictures make the necessary connections between letters and sounds. Young readers feel successful when they connect the sounds, letters, and pictures (Beierle & Lynes, 1993).

Other ideas that will help young children learn the alphabet are:

- Use alphabet letters or magnets. As the young child plays with the letters, ask him to name the letter. Older preschool children may have fun spelling their first or last names using the letters.
- Look at printed words. Wherever you are, ask the young child to notice signs, cereal boxes, truck logos, and billboards. Ask her to identify letters and, if she is ready, to tell the associated sound of the letter. An example is Metro – "M".
- Have big letters available for children to use or to copy (block letters, magnetic letters, sponge letters, etc.)
- Learn the alphabet by using the senses. Use play dough to make the letters of the child's name. Place paper over sandpaper letters and rub with a crayon to make letters appear.
- Put sand in a box and have children write letters in the sand using their fingers.

The learning activity that follows helps beginning readers use *clues* to recognize letters and their sounds.

3. Learning activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Have plenty of magazines, old greeting cards, and newspapers appropriate for young children (advertisement sections), glue, scissors, paper markers, and crayons available for this collage activity.

Procedure:

- Read aloud alphabet books like *Richard Scarry's ABC Word Book* and *26 Letters and 99 Cents*. These books use pictures to connect letters and sounds in a very predictable way. Young readers will experience great success when they "read" these books independently.
- Ask parents to cut out interesting pictures from magazines.
- Have parents name the object in each of their pictures, then paste them onto a large piece of paper that is poster-size. At home, children can include other collage materials like **a**nt stickers, **b**uttons, **s**eeds, etc.
- Under each picture or object, write the word that identifies it.
- Share the pictures with the group and stress beginning letters and sounds. (When this activity is completed at home, it is important that young children understand the relationship of the letter and the sound; it is not important that they finish the activity in one day.)
- Display the completed collages.

4. Group socialization (15 minutes)—Eating the Alphabet

Serve animal crackers for this *Learning Party*. Request that parents talk informally about their animal crackers, focusing on the beginning sounds of the animal words (i.e. **b**ear). When this activity is completed at home, a parent can help to expand their young child's vocabulary by talking about the animals' sounds, colors, size, etc.

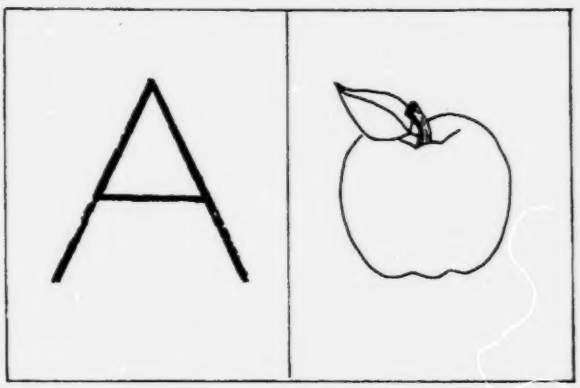
5. Home connections (15 minutes)—Activity 9: Easy as ABC!

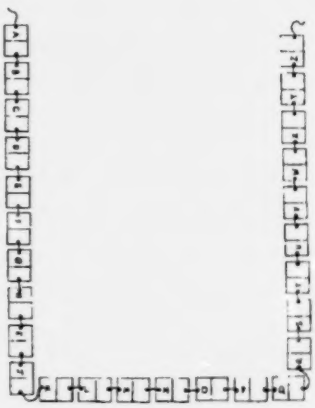
Reading alphabet books is an excellent way to expose young children to letters and sounds. Children who know some alphabet letters and sounds when they start school learn to read sooner and better than children who have not learned letters and sounds. This takes lots of practice.

Activity 9

Easy as ABC!

Literacy Learning Party #9: Early Reading Strategies— Learning Alphabet Letters and Sounds





Purpose: Sharing the alphabet with preschool-age children helps them to begin to recognize the shapes of letters and link them with sounds. When you show children letters over and over again, they soon learn to distinguish between individual letters—what they look like and what they sound like.

Materials: 26 pieces of paper or index cards (5"x 7")
markers or crayons
glue
yarn
old magazines, catalogs, greeting cards, etc.
scissors
hole punch

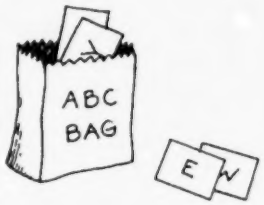
Literacy Connection

Children need lots of exposure to letters and their sounds. When making a trip to the grocery store, encourage your child to talk about the food you are placing in your shopping basket. Emphasize the printed letters (words) on the boxes, bags, and cartons. As your child gets older and knows the alphabet letter names, ask her to say the beginning and ending letter sounds.

Preparation:

1. This activity may take place over a two-week period. An adult should take 26 small pieces of paper or index cards and write one letter of the alphabet on each card using markers or crayons. Be sure to write each letter in upper-case letters (i.e., A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z).

2. Have old magazines, catalogs, greeting cards, etc., available for the child to choose pictures to cut out and glue on blank cards.



Activity: Have the child pick a letter card, practice the sound that the letter makes, and then cut out a picture that begins with the letter. Allow the child to glue the picture next to the letter. Punch holes on both ends of the alphabet cards and weave yarn through the cards to create a long alphabet train.

The letter and picture cards become an alphabet game. Have two piles of cards on the floor: one with letters, the other with pictures. Ask the child to select a letter, then search for the picture card that goes with it. Begin with a few matching cards at first and slowly add more as your child gains confidence.

Extensions and variations:

- Place several plastic alphabet letters, or alphabet letters written on small pieces of paper, in a bag and have the child pull one letter out of the bag and identify the letter. For children who know the names of the letters, practice making letter sounds.
- Make an alphabet book by taking 7 pieces of paper, folding them in half and stapling at the fold—making 28 pages in all. Write one letter at the top or bottom of each page. Remember to write each letter in upper-case print. Encourage the child to either draw or cut pictures out of a magazine and glue them to the page with the beginning letter sound. (For example, paste a picture of a bus to the "B" page.) Don't forget to go back and read the alphabet book with the child author.
- Children love to sing the alphabet song. Sing the letters loud and clear and sing it often!
- With a young preschool child, print the letters of his name on paper and say each letter as you write it. Letters can also be formed out of yarn or clay.
- Children can practice writing alphabet letters by making signs for their rooms or classroom.

Literacy Learning Party #10:
Ways to Help Children Read

Purpose: Adults can help young children develop reading skills through the use of a variety of reading strategies. This *Literacy Learning Party* shares several proven methods for helping children read and comprehend written text.

1. Warm-up Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Before the *Learning Party*, read Deborah Guarino's *Is Your Mama a Llama*, so that there are no surprises when you read it aloud to the group.

Procedure: Have group members introduce themselves by clapping out the sound parts (syllables) of their names. Show the group how to clap when they hear a syllable in their name. For example, four claps for El – len, Dan - iels!

For the second part of the *warm-up*, read aloud *Is Your Mama A Llama*. Before you read the book aloud, ask the group to be thinking about:

- Words that rhyme,
- Words that have the same beginning sound, and
- Words that have the same ending sound.

When you have finished reading, ask the group to identify words from the above categories. Summarize by telling the group that rhyming skills are one of the earliest and most important breakthroughs in a child's path to becoming a reader. As teachers and parents, we help our children create rhymes and listen for rhyming patterns in language when we read storybooks like *Is Your Mama a Llama*. (Later in this *Learning Party*, we will learn more about the importance of rhymes.)

2. Presentation of "Ways to Help Children Read" Content (20 minutes)

Adults can help young children make sense of reading by using the following reading practices.

Introduce the Book. Parents can discuss the book before reading it. This will help children guess what the story might be about. Introducing books makes new stories easier for children to follow.

Demonstration: Hold a book so that the group can see it and introduce it by saying the title and author. Before reading, ask the group, "What do you think this story might be about?"

Make Predictions. Good readers predict what will happen as they read a book. Young children can practice the same skill when they use their own language and the book's language to predict words. They confirm their predictions by looking at the pictures, and in some cases, the words. Predictable books use repeated patterns of events and words to help young readers anticipate the storyline. By learning to predict what a story might be about, preschoolers are developing an important reading strategy that they use throughout their lives.

Demonstration: Before reading each page of the book, ask "What do you think is going to happen next?" "What do you see in the pictures?"

Show Print Concepts. Print concepts include: reading from left to right and top to bottom, word separated by spaces, letters in uppercase and lowercase, and knowledge that printed symbols carry a message. Children begin learning print concepts during their earliest interactions with books. They quickly learn that words, not pictures, tell the story. They develop an understanding of where to begin reading, how to move along the text as they read, and how punctuation influences the flow of the text.

Demonstration: As part of a rereading of a book, ask the group," Where do we begin reading on a page?" "Which way do we go?" "Where do we go when we get to the end of a line?" "Who can show us the first word on a page?" "...the last word?"

Ask for a Retelling. A child retells a story when he is able to summarize the story in his own words using the proper sequence.

Demonstration: Say to the group, "Let's think about the book that we just read. Who can tell us what happened first in the story...What was the problem in the middle of the story?...How did the story end? "

Highlight Rhymes. Most children begin to understand and produce rhymes before they enter kindergarten. Some children as young as three years old are able to play in rhyming games. Rhyming skills typically develop in three stages (Opitz, 2000):

1st Stage: Knowledge of nursery rhymes—children are able to recite one or more parts of popular nursery rhymes. Young children who can recite several nursery rhymes usually become better readers than children who cannot recite nursery rhymes.

2nd Stage: Awareness of rhymes in words—children are able to recognize when

rhymes occur in a group of words. They can listen to several words, such as hat, mat, and hit and figure out which words rhyme.

3rd Stage: Production of rhymes—children are able to make rhymes. For example, when asked what rhymes with cat, a child world is able to answer using a word like hat, mat, rat, or bat.

By five years of age, most children will show abilities in all three stages. Children who have had many experiences with and exposure to rhyme will move through these stages quite naturally.

3. Learning Activity (20 minutes)

Preparation: Prepare the materials to make *Maracas*—toilet paper tubes, aluminum foil, tempera paint, thick paper, rubber bands, ribbons, yarn, crepe paper streamers, seeds, pebbles, and bottle caps. Write the following song and rhyme on chart paper:

Rain, Rain, Go Away
Rain, rain, go away,
come again some other day.
Rain, rain, go away,
all the children want to play.

Popcorn, Popcorn
Popcorn, popcorn,
sizzling in the pan.
Shake it up, shake it up,
bam bam bam.

Popcorn, popcorn,
now it's getting hot.
Shake it up, shake it up,
pop pop pop.

Procedure: Singing is a part of young children's everyday lives. They sing as they play, clean up, and get ready for bed. Without realizing it, children discover much about sounds and language by singing.

Many songs use rhyme and children's attention is naturally drawn to rhyming words as they listen to and sing a song. Parents and teachers can highlight the rhyming words in a song by drawing children's attention to it. For example, a parent says, "day, play—they rhyme!"

- Introduce *Rain, Rain, Go Away* to the group and sing it. Invite the group to sing with you on the second go-round.
- While singing, ask the group to clap, tap their feet, or jump each time they hear a rhyme.
- Introduce playing maracas (review Activity 10: *Maracas*) as another way of inviting children to experience rhythmic patterns and words. Provide a demonstration of shaking the maracas to keep time with the rhythm in the song.
- Show the steps for making the maracas and then invite each participant to make their own.
- Once the maracas are made, conclude by shaking to the *Popcorn, Popcorn* rhyme.

At the conclusion of this activity, tell the group that shaking in time to songs and rhymes will draw children's attention to the sounds in words.

4. Group Socialization (15 minutes)

Ask the group to talk with one another about songs that they sang when they were young. After 15 minutes, ask individuals to share their favorite songs with the group.

5. Home Connection (15 minutes)—Activity 10: Maracas

Parents can help their children make their very own maracas. Refer participants to the *Maracas* activity in the *Activity Book*. By using this simple homemade instrument, children will increase their small hand muscles, both in making and in playing. Also emphasize that music is a rich resource for fostering the development of language, movement, and thinking.

Every culture has simple songs of celebration and love that children can learn and that can help them express themselves. Ask parents how they can provide more opportunities for their children to be exposed to music, such as visiting musical events, playing music at home, etc.

Activity 10

Maracas

Literacy Learning Party #10: Ways to Help Children Read

Purpose: Maracas are percussion instruments. Playing maracas provides an opportunity for children to experience sequencing rhythmic patterns. The process of making and playing maracas increases a child's fine motor development. With careful teacher guidance, children discover a variety of pitches and compare them. Children shake out patterns using their maracas.

Literacy Connection

Teach your child a song that you sang when you were your child's age.

Materials:

toilet paper tubes	rubber bands
aluminum foil	ribbons, yarn
tempera paint	crepe paper streamers
thick paper	seeds, pebbles, and bottle caps

Preparation:

1. The children paint the exterior of the paper tubes.

2. When the paint is dry, the children cover one end of the paper tube with aluminum foil or thick paper secured with a rubber band. Younger children should be assisted by adult helpers.

3. They fill the paper tube with a handful of seeds, pebbles, or bottle caps.

4. The open end is then secured as in Step 2.

5. Children can decorate the outside of the paper tube with crepe paper streamers, ribbons, or yarn.

Activity: In a small or large group, children sit in a circle and take turns establishing a rhythm, which the group then follows. For example, use the rhythm of each child's name: Jo-nas—2 beats; El-e-na—3 beats. Ask the children to guess how the sound is made. Have them experiment shaking their maracas at different rates—fast, slow, medium. Ask what sound is made when the maraca is rolled or tapped.

Extensions and variations:

- Sing or play a song, using the maracas to keep time.

- Play music on a record or tape and have the children parade around the room, keeping the beat of the music.

- Ask older children to describe the pattern. For example: beat, beat, rest, beat, beat, rest.

- Make a tambourine. Use crayons, paint, and paper to decorate two paper plates. Select pebbles, bottle caps, or seeds, and place a handful on one plate. Staple the plates together.

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Creating Child-Centered Classroom Series

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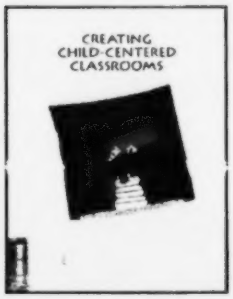

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A CHILD'S HOME IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT PLACE FOR LEARNING. FAMILY MEMBERS ARE A CHILD'S FIRST TEACHERS AND SET THE COURSE FOR FUTURE SUCCESS. BUT WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN DEVELOP THOSE IMPORTANT LITERACY SKILLS?

LITERACY LEARNING PARTIES FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS IS A 10-PART TRAINING SERIES DESIGNED TO ASSIST PARENTS IN HELPING THEIR CHILDREN DEVELOP THE SKILLS THEY WILL NEED TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE. EACH LITERACY LEARNING PARTY EXPLORES A SPECIFIC LITERACY COMPONENT AND INTRODUCES PRACTICAL AND EASY-TO-FOLLOW ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS FOR HOME USE. TEACHERS AND OTHER EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS CAN USE THIS TRAINERS GUIDE TO DESIGN A WORKSHOP SERIES THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE. A COMPANION PARTICIPANT ACTIVITY BOOK IS AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH, AND INCLUDES EACH OF THE HOME ACTIVITIES INTRODUCED IN THE TRAINING.

THE LITERACY COMPONENTS EXPLORED IN EACH WORKSHOP INCLUDE:

- PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT
- LITERACY THROUGH PLAY
- SHARING BOOKS
- CHOOSING AND SHARING BOOKS, RHYMES, AND CHANTS
- ENGAGING CHILDREN IN WRITING
- EARLY READING STRATEGIES
- WAYS TO HELP CHILDREN READ

LITERACY LEARNING PARTIES FOR 3-5 YEAR OLDS: TRAINER'S GUIDE IS PART OF A SERIES OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY CHILDREN'S RESOURCES INTERNATIONAL (CRI) FOR EDUCATORS, PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS. OTHER TITLES AVAILABLE INCLUDE:

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